This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

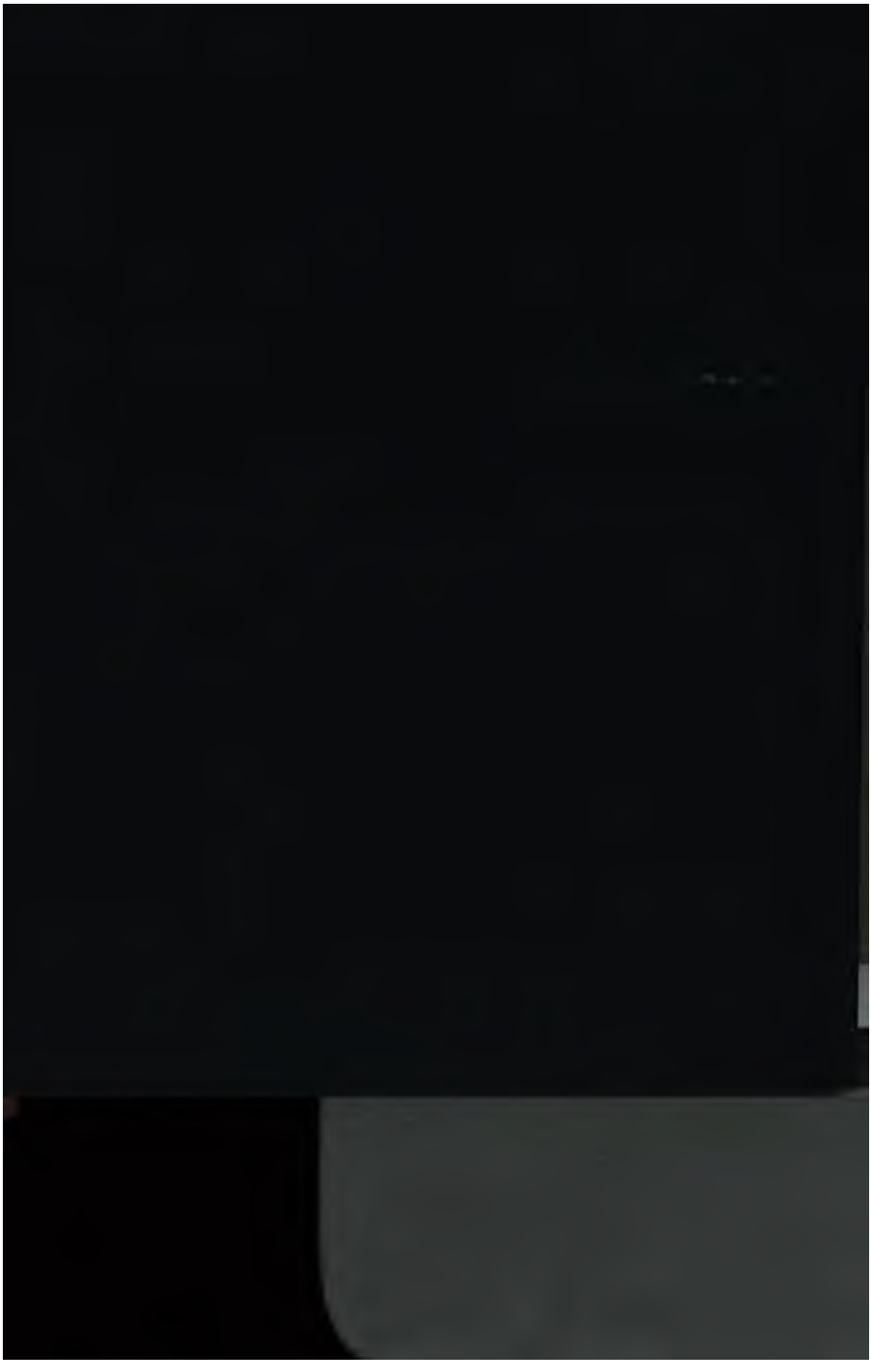
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`



1. Christianity.-Tendencies (Modern).
2. Jesus Christ.-Teaching.

SEP 22 1921

Irving Levy

(Blyth)

CHRISTIANITY AND TRADITION

BY

P. G. BLYTH, M.A.

LONDON:

WATTS & CO.,

17, JOHNSON'S COURT, FLEET STREET, E.C.

1906.

26922A

PREFACE

In my youth I received a considerable amount of instruction in Christianity. The result for me was many difficulties, theoretical and practical, on which the words of professional Christian teachers did not throw light, so that it was necessary to make further search for solutions to them. There are, I think, many persons in a similar position to that in which I was; and I have tried to place my conclusions at their disposal.

To critics of traditional Christianity I am much indebted. I feel that they have helped me out of a close atmosphere. They have not weakened my religious faith, but assisted me to a sounder one. I think that by the nominal teachers of Christianity its essentially spiritual nature and its freedom are quite obscured.

P. G. B.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. THE INDIVIDUAL AND AUTHORITY	1
The present inadequacy of "religion"	1
Belief and future punishment	3
The duty of individual judgment	6
The necessity of individual judgment	8
The Authorities—The Pope, the Church, the Bible	11
Inspiration	14
The interpretation of the Bible	15
The place of Authority and authorities	20
The place of Reason	22
The interplay of Authority and Reason illustrated by English History	25
Free Thought by Individuals does not mean instability to Society	26
How we must consider Christianity	28
II. CHRISTIANITY AND HISTORY	30
The re-consideration of History	30
The trustworthiness of evidence	32
The practice of Early Historians	34
They have left their impressions	35
The Canon of Scripture	36
The Copying of Documents	37
The inevitable uncertainty	38
The basis of present personal experience	39
History shows a continual evolution	43
It shows how priests have erred in the Past	44
III. BELIEF	45
Absolute Certainty	45
Conviction	48
Opinion	48
Mere assent	48
The belief in historical Christianity	49

PAGE

The suppression of doubt 49
Trying to believe 51
The necessity of change 53
Faith and alterations of Creed . . . 54
The part of Scepticism 57
Science and Religion 57
The real conflict 59

IV. JESUS AND HIS AUTHORITY 61
The appeal of Jesus to individual judgment . 61
His rational methods of teaching . . . 62
His self-assertion 65
The perfection attributed to Jesus . . . 68
The supernatural nature attributed to him . 70
The doctrine of the Virgin-Birth . . . 70
Jesus and his divinity 72
The meaning of his divinity . . . 73
The essence of a Christian . . . 75
The life and atonement of Jesus . . . 75
Jesus and the disputes of to-day . . . 78

V. THE TRADITIONS AND THEIR ORIGIN . . . 80
The traditional idea of God . . . 80
The truer conception 81
Answers to Prayer 82
Some reasons for the unsatisfactoriness of the traditional idea 83
Its human origin 86
Supernaturalism 91
What it means practically 92
The Miracles 95
The origin of supernaturalism and its supports . 97
A question of simplest explanation . . . 100

VI. THE GREAT COMMANDMENT 103
Its meaning 103
Its reference to the intellect . . . 105
Conscience 106
The duty of Progress 107
"Keeping on the safe side" . . . 109
Illustration from the reference of Jesus to children 110
The notion of duty transcended—not law, but gospel 113

PAGE

The Second Commandment . . . 115
Toleration 115
The inter-dependence of men . . . 116
Egoism and Altruism 117
Competition 120

VII. CHRISTIAN CONDUCT 122
Concerning meekness and weakness . . 122
Man's passivity in relation to God . . 123
"Take no thought for the morrow" . . 125
The theory of non-resistance . . . 126
What it cannot effect 127
What it can effect 129
The kind of resistance which is indefensible . 132
The necessity of physical resistance . . 132
The character of the Sermon on the Mount . 135
Rules of Conduct in general . . . 135
Self-denial as discipline 137
Its voluntariness 139
Self-denial means activity and progress . . 143
Self-denial as self-consecration . . . 144

VIII. RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE 146
Jesus and the Sabbath 146
The nature of the Rest-Day . . . 147
Rest and Activity 148
Sunday Workers 152
The "Lord's Day" 153
Rites and Ceremonies 154
"Sacred" and "Secular" 155
The use of symbols 156
The Laying-on of Hands, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper 157
The only sense in which religious observance can be called a duty 159
The necessity of new symbols . . . 160
Spiritual advisers 164
The spread of Rationalism . . . 165

IX. CONTINUITY IN RELIGION 168
Undue Exclusiveness 16
"Conversion" a natural process . . . 170
Sudden change not essential . . . 174

PAGE

Jesus and Nicodemus 175
A quotation from Paul 177
Original Sin. 178
This world and the next 180
Jesus and "the world" 183
The religious man and the great man . . 185
The way of betterment—by growth . . 186
The preacher not a pleader, but a witness . 187
A recapitulation 188
The popular attitude towards religion . . 193

X. RELIGIOUS EDUCATION. 195
The relation between religious and secular education 195
Ordinary religious instruction . . . 196
Its inefficiency 196
The nature of religious instruction . . 198
Religion in secular instruction . . . 201
Indirect teaching 203
Direct teaching. Its danger . . . 204
Its substance 206
The injury from premature work . . . 207
The only important matter . . . 211
The essential that religious instruction be undogmatic 211

I.

THE INDIVIDUAL AND AUTHORITY

THE allegation which has been made that men in this age are indifferent to religion, if by this word is meant the essence of religion and not its conventions, is not supported by the facts. The great sales of religious literature, the increasing prominence given to religious topics in the daily Press, the extraordinary interest which was shown in the *Daily Telegraph* "Do We Believe?" correspondence,[1] are some of the indications which should render it hardly possible to repeat the accusation. As thinking beings, who do not, and cannot, live entirely for the present moment, men are naturally interested in questions concerning their own nature and prospects, not only from curiosity, but from the wish to spend their lives to the best advantage. "Religion is one thing," says Sir Oliver Lodge; "church services as often conducted are quite another thing.....It is not religion to which people are indifferent."[2] That there is indifference, or even scorn, shown towards much that passes under the name of religion is undoubtedly true.

[1] *Daily Telegraph*, September 26th to December 31st, 1904, averaging three columns daily (only a percentage printed).

[2] *Hibbert Journal*, January, 1904.

Men do not go to church. The clergy are by many held in low estimation. Is it really a matter for surprise? If a man has attended on several occasions, and feels that he has received no benefit, he naturally ceases to go. The church did not reach him; for him it had no religion. If he hears doctrine which he cannot understand, or cannot reconcile with the principles accepted in daily life; if the teaching seems to him useless, unworkable, or contemptible, and is never explained to his satisfaction, it occurs to him that he wastes his time by listening. And if he observes the characters of those who make professions of religion, and finds that they do not compare favourably with those who make no profession; if people called religious do not compel his admiration, but sometimes excite rather repulsion or contempt, he feels no inducement to follow in their footsteps. He is not, therefore, to be called indifferent to religion, though he may appear to be so because his advances in that direction have only resulted in perplexity.

It seems, then, that there is at the present time some contradiction, or want of relation, between the appearance and reality of religion. What is ordinarily included under the term "religion" seems, at the best, to show marked insufficiency. A state of this kind has plenty of precedents. The conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees was of this nature—between essential

and nominal religion. A consideration of the position and teaching of Jesus in that conflict should throw light on the difficulties of to-day. To such consideration these pages are mainly devoted. My conclusion is that there are great discrepancies between the teaching of Jesus and the various representations—more or less antagonistic to one another—of Christianity current; and that the term "Christianity" commonly indicates a serious misunderstanding of Christ.

We do not now, all of us, continue to think that the purpose of attending to religion is that we may escape the pains of fire. But the old view is still widely held: the view that all will, at some time after death, stand before a judge on a throne; that those who have not held the true religion will be condemned to the pains of burning for ever; and that the object of believing and acting according to the true religion is to escape this terrible end and instead to obtain happiness.

From the point of view of such a belief it can only be considered a great calamity that there should be so little agreement as to what the true religion is. Apart from the non-Christian religions, there exist many denominations of Christians holding doctrines more or less different from one another. There are at least two types, whose adherents consider their differences so fundamental and important that they use their utmost endeavours to effect the spread of their own views to the

exclusion of those of their opponents. A Roman Catholic (generally speaking) believes that it is essential to be one of "the faithful," a member of Holy Mother Church, and that an outsider cannot be "saved." An Evangelical Protestant says that in order to be "saved" it is necessary to have had certain experiences, to have "repented" and to have been "converted," and that a Roman Catholic stands in great danger of damnation. Neither the Catholic nor the Protestant would deny that there were many seemingly good people in other communions; but, though he could not explain how, he would say that they were responsible for themselves and must suffer the penalty of error. And each *knows*, as he says, that his own religion is the true one.

The fact which is evident to the observer, who is endeavouring to find out the truth, is that there are different men holding different doctrines as essential to "salvation," and that the man with one view is as sincere as the man with another. If one is right, the others must be wrong. Is it necessary to conclude that all the others, owing to their upbringing, or to their not meeting with the right teaching, will come to destruction; and that men who have done their best may end their days in hell? Such a question in the twentieth century is absurd. And yet, though opinions are more charitable than they were a century ago, such doctrine is not yet dead. The Salvation Army

carries it on its banner. The Church of England allows it to stand in black and white in its Prayer Book. So it is not superfluous to repeat that no man's soul can come to ruin merely because of the dogmas which he holds, or fails to hold. For God must be just. A man's creed depends chiefly on his parentage. If he be of a white race, he is likely to be some kind of a Christian; if he belong to a black or yellow race, he will almost certainly not be a Christian. There could be no justice in making it a primary condition of salvation that a man be born with a white skin. And, given that he is born in Christendom, the Church that a man belongs to depends mostly upon the influences to which he has been subjected in youth; he cannot justly be held responsible for these. That God is just must be postulated; otherwise all inquiries are useless, and genuine religion is impossible. Hence, no inquirer need fear to reject tenets which he is told are essential, if he do so honestly. That any one who sincerely seeks the truth should come to a bad end in consequence of his pursuit is inconceivable to a reasonable mind. It is a favourite saying with some "religious" persons that those who differ from themselves must be careless or insincere, or tainted by some "pet sin" which causes unbelief. But by such aspersions they merely exhibit their inability to enter into a different point of view, and draw upon themselves ridicule. Assuredly a man's eternal happiness does not depend on his

submission to any of the various religious systems existing at this time.

Is it of no importance, then, what we believe? It matters that we should learn and do all of which we are capable. A man cannot justly be judged for not attaining to that which he was unable to reach, but he may be judged for not fulfilling his possibilities. No excuse has been found why a man should not do his best to discover the truth. And no one can leave his responsibility to another. Not only is a man innocent who does not accept doctrines concerning which he has objections, but it is his duty not to accept such doctrines. In spiritual matters nonconformity is not only permissible, but it is the only right and safe attitude until all objections to conformity have been met. Suppose a person who accepts orthodox views because it is less trouble to do so, or because he is threatened with punishment if he does not, brought up for final judgment, and that it is pointed out to him that those views have errors in them. What could he say? He would stand convicted of negligence and cowardice. It would be no defence and small consolation for him to denounce his teachers, who may have been sincere enough in spite of their mistaken ideas. A man who shirks his responsibility makes occasion for his future discomfiture. The judgment on an individual must be based on what he has individually done, or not done. And so from this point of view of future

judgment may be seen the positive duty of individual inquiry, of not submitting to authority, but of testing religious beliefs by one's own powers of thought. Responsibility and authority go together; every individual is the supreme authority for his own soul.

For a man not to exercise his own judgment in religious matters is to give up his greatest privilege. To take refuge thoughtlessly in the teaching of a Church is to become a parasite.[1] Some have no doubt thought that by submission to the Church they were giving up the world to gain their souls. The truth is rather the other way; to submit is to gain the good opinion of the Church authorities, but *ipso facto* to give away one's own soul. It is said that "men's hearts are deceitful," that the wisdom of God is foolishness with men, and that it is impossible for men to find out the truth by themselves, implying that they ought to submit to certain religious authorities. We know that we are all ignorant and foolish in greater or less degree, and that there are others wiser than ourselves; the fact remains that from each man's own "heart" the decision must ultimately come—an inalienable right and duty. From the wise he may get instruction; it is not for them to decide for him. The learned judge contributes much to a trial, but the verdict comes from common jurymen. Again,

[1] See Drummond's *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*, chapters on "Parasitism" and "Semi-Parasitism."

the experts in theology differ, the doctors disagree; if the inquirer realise that, an individual decision is forced upon him.

Further, there are psychological and linguistic reasons why private judgment in some degree is a necessity. When we use a common word, our conception of its meaning will not vary to any extent from that of the person we speak to; frequent use has given it a well-known and sufficiently definite value, and it is good currency for the exchange of our thoughts. But when we are dealing with deeper notions, distant from the visible surface life, the matter is not so simple; the philosophical writer has to use his words and qualify his statements very carefully in order to convey his idea. And it is with deep notions that we are much concerned on the theoretical side of religion. It is possible to use the same words to different persons and convey quite different meanings. The meaning of any communication, oral or written, depends not only upon the statements, but upon what those statements imply; and this, under different circumstances and to different people, may greatly vary. Protestants all get their doctrine from the Bible, but different sects get different doctrine. Men who recite the same creed may have in reality very different beliefs, their conceptions of the words used not being the same. I quote from a psychological writer[1]:—

[1] J. Adams, *Herbartian Psychology*, pp. 185, 186.

> The words of the dictionary are indeed symbols of thought, but of thought reduced to its least common denominator, so as to be more easily compared with other thoughts. The dictionary meaning may be compared to the skeleton of the full meaning : something fixed and definite, to which each person who uses it adds his own special flesh and blood.....For each of us makes his own little dictionary, which agrees more or less with those of others. Pupils in the same school, and belonging to the same class of society, naturally have dictionaries that correspond pretty closely to one another. The farther people are removed from each other in the circumstances of their life, the greater the difference between their internal dictionaries. To such an extent does this go that people speaking the same language, and using the same words and constructions, may be at a loss to understand each other. Mark Twain gives an excellent example of this in the interview between a rough miner and a clergyman whom the miner wishes to conduct the funeral service of a fellow-miner. "Are you the duck that runs the gospel mill next door?" begins the miner. This is clearly English—the words are all Saxon, and the construction is perfectly straightforward. Yet the clergyman can make no sense out of it. When the clergyman replies, it is the miner's turn to shake his head. The religious dictionary is as hard for the miner as the mining one is for the minister. Slang and dialect are only exaggerated forms of this universal system of private dictionaries.

I think that much of the clerical dictionary is commonly incomprehensible to educated men.

It is not only to the symbols of language that these considerations apply. An artist can see in a picture what is invisible to the ordinary spectator. The "primrose by the river's brim" illustrates this fact. A musician will hear in classical music that

of which the non-musical man is unconscious. He only that has the ears to hear can hear. A man can only receive instruction in terms of what he already knows. To all information that we acquire we ourselves necessarily contribute. To him only that hath can be given. Every hearer or reader has to supply from his own experience meanings to the words he encounters. He has to interpret for himself as best he can the significance of what he is shown. The values of words and all objects depend upon the person using them; they have none in themselves. What a man perceives depends upon what he already is. That is a truth of which I shall make several important applications. "In the end, to know the universe, we must fall back on our personal experience and sensation."[1] And so, if religion is to be real, and not empty forms, individual judgment is not only right, but necessary.

It is often said that God has given us a divine revelation through his Son and in his "Word," by which is meant that certain definite truths have been communicated to us, to which all men ought to conform. But such a definite revelation is impossible. So long as men, from different upbringing and circumstances, have different ideas, there must be different opinions as to what the contents of the revelation really are. If someone tell us that a certain assertion must be true

[1] *Appearance and Reality*, p. 260.

because God has said so, we may reply that he is making an assumption which we cannot accept. His own experience has led him to believe that that is what God has said. But if our experience cause us to think differently, his argument is worthless. No man doubts God; what men do is to doubt others who dogmatise about God. All that any other person can do for us is to communicate to us a part of his own view, so far as we are capable of appreciating it, and so aid us to understand our own experience. Thus we may come to have a common view, and take a considerable step in the direction of the truth. For our experience does not tell us the whole truth. It can only direct us on the way thereto. The fact remains that it is the only way for us. As the power of coin of the realm to feed and clothe us depends on our being in a position to spend it, the value of any teaching for us is measured exactly by our ability—gained from previous experience—to realise it. Ultimately, each man himself has to interpret the significance of what he sees and hears. Each for himself must be the supreme authority.

And now, granting this necessity for each individual to judge for himself, is it possible for him to find an authority with claims so satisfactory that he may at once sanction its supremacy—an elected sovereign? Authorities that have held sway in Christendom are the Pope, the Church, and the

Bible. With regard to the infallibility of the Pope, this is what Mr. Balfour says[1]:—

> If I rightly understand the teaching of the Roman Catholic theologians upon this subject, the following propositions, at *least*, must be accepted before the doctrine of Infallibility can be regarded as satisfactorily proved or adequately held:—(1) That the words "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock," etc., and, again, "Feed my sheep," were uttered by Christ; and that, being so uttered, were of Divine authorship, and cannot fail. (2) That the meaning of these words is—(*a*) that St. Peter was endowed with a primacy of jurisdiction over the other Apostles; (*b*) that he was to have a perpetual line of successors, similarly endowed with a primacy of jurisdiction; (*c*) that these successors were to be Bishops of Rome; (*d*) that the primacy of jurisdiction carries with it the certainty of Divine "assistance"; (*e*) that though this "assistance" does not ensure either the morality, or the wisdom, or the general accuracy of the Pontiff to whom it is given, it does ensure his absolute inerrancy whenever he shall, *ex cathedrâ*, define a doctrine of faith or morals; (*f*) that no pronouncement can be regarded as *ex cathedrâ* unless it relates to some matter already thoroughly sifted and considered by competent divines.

In this country, at any rate, most men, taking into account what they know of the Popes and their actions, are quite unable to accept an authority whose claim is so far from obvious. The claim depends on the authority of the Bible, which remains to be considered.

The authority of the episcopal Church, based on the episcopal succession, is sometimes proclaimed by Anglican sacerdotalists. But where is its

[1] *The Foundations of Belief*, p. 224.

authority to be found? The individual clergy do not agree with one another; the bishops do not think alike; and the Catholic Church has different branches with no common voice. The spiritual authority of the Church for Anglicans to-day can hardly be said to exist. All that can be heard is a number of discordant voices which do not inspire their hearers with confidence as to their wisdom. Men are familiar with the clergy, and find that they have virtues and failings like others. And a brief study of history is enough to show the errors which the Church has made in the past. The episcopal succession cannot be traced from the beginning. The claim of the Church, too, is, at least in part, dependent on the authority of the Bible.

The chief claims, both of Pope and Church, are probably just the facts of their existence and of their having been considered authorities in the past. They are supported by tradition, which must always have weight. That accounts for their continued acceptance by some; but it does not make their positions true. To be in possession is a powerful claim in the law-courts and in material human affairs; it is not a final argument for the soul.

The generally accepted authority in this country is the Bible. But the growth of historical research and criticism in the nineteenth century has resulted in the necessity of a profound modification of view concerning it. Historians deny that we can accept

either the Old or New Testament in the way that the tradition of our ancestors taught us to accept it. The orthodox, on the other hand, say that the Bible is "inspired," and that it is not to be judged like other books. I postpone the historical question to the next chapter. The doctrine of inspiration sometimes takes the form of literal inspiration—that the Biblical writers were guided by a Higher Power to write down the literal truth. But words are nothing in themselves; they are only counters whose values depend upon temporal custom. Their values change, as may be seen by comparing the use of the word "prevent" in the Prayer Book with its meaning to-day, or that of "charity" in 1 Cor. xiii. with its use now. There are now standard dictionaries which limit more or less closely the value of a word; but, as has been pointed out, they cannot absolutely fix that value. And there were not even standard dictionaries when the Bible was written. Further, Englishmen depend upon translations, so that if the doctrine is to be of any value to them it must be supposed that the translators were also inspired. And the disagreements between different passages of the Bible bar our acceptance of the theory. For instance, the "twenty-three thousand" of 1 Cor. x. 8 and the "twenty-four thousand" of Num. xxv. 9. It is easy to find many examples. "In the Greek New Testament we have an increasing number of variations (now exceeding a hundred thousand),

which, indeed, do not affect any doctrine or precept, yet seem to be inconsistent with this theory"[1] (of literal inspiration).

And what are we to think of a theory which affirms this verse to have been inspired by an omnipotent God?

> And the Lord was with Judah; and he drave out the inhabitants of the mountain; but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron.[2]

It reminds one of the puzzling request in the Prayer Book for peace, "because there is none other that fighteth for us but only thou, O God."

It is suggested that, though the doctrine of literal inspiration be unsatisfactory, yet the Scriptures are inspired in the sense that the spiritual lessons they contain are divine truth, and authoritative for us. But the lessons depend upon the reader. Writings have such meanings as their readers are able to find in them; these vary in depth according to the particular reader's nature. *The* meaning—that of the writer—cannot be precisely attained by another; in superficial matters one may approximate to it, but in spiritual matters it may be difficult to make any near approach to it. If a man say that something is true "because the Bible says so," we may often reply that to us the Bible conveys a different idea.

[1] Schaff's *Encyclopædia of Religious Knowledge.* Article "Inspiration."
[2] Judges i. 19.

> In religion
> What damned error, but some sober brow
> Will bless it, and approve it with a text?
> —*Merchant of Venice.*

So that the doctrine of a supreme inspired authority is at any rate barren. It is useless to speak of an inspired authority, unless the reader is also supplied with inspiration. To this it may be said that to those who pray for it the Holy Spirit is promised, to guide them to the truth. Well, prayer is something deeper than words, and there can be no more earnest prayer to the Spirit of Truth than a life-long devotion to the cause of truth. And the nineteenth century probably saw no men more devoted to truth than Darwin and Stephen.

The Greek word *θεόπνευστος*, found in 2 Tim. iii. 16, and rendered by "inspiration," is held to mean "breathing the divine spirit." If this meaning be used without any exclusive or supernatural implication, all will admit that the Bible is inspired. But Shakespeare, Browning, and all writers who obtain a hold on their readers, breathe the divine spirit. They could not otherwise be effective. Wherever is beauty or truth, there is inspiration. The book-lover finds it in literature, the nature-lover in nature, the lover of mankind among his fellows. Could Newton in one sphere, or Nelson in another, have effected the results they did without inspiration? All things living, though it be often faintly, breathe the divine spirit. That the Bible exhibits inspiration in a superlative

degree few will deny. But the doctrine on which its supreme authority is based is that its inspiration is of a different nature from that in which the word may be applied anywhere else.

What basis has this doctrine? It is a tradition which has been believed for a long time. That does not prove it true; it was for a very long time that men believed that the earth was flat. Probably most of those who believe it do so because they have been so instructed in youth, and have grown up in the unquestioning belief in its truth. Their religion is built on it, and they are unwilling, or even unable, to make an alteration in their foundation. Some believe it because their own experience, the effect on their own lives of reading it, convinces them of its truth. That is the best reason they could give. But it does not prove the doctrine true. Their experience may be merely the result of their want of acquaintance with other writings or appreciation of them, or their narrowness of interests and sympathies, so that they are unable to perceive the divine elsewhere. There are plenty whose experience brings no such conviction to them. As knowledge increases and education spreads, more and more men find supernaturalism (which is considered in Chapter V.) to be unsatisfactory; and it becomes increasingly clear that the Bible has not a monopoly of inspiration. The doctrine has no sound foundation. And thus is lost the claim that the book is a supreme authority.

In practice, even the most orthodox do not submit entirely to the Bible's authority. If they find teaching in conflict with their own views, they bring their own judgment to bear on the matter. In Luke xiv. 26 it is written: "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." What man who calls the Bible his absolute authority carries out those words in their ordinary sense, or thinks that he ought to carry them out? He explains that their true meaning is not what appears at first sight. He feels obliged to think for himself on the point; to leave the decision to the book does not seem possible. Again, does anyone carry out, or believe fully that he ought to carry out in their ordinary sense, all the precepts in the Sermon on the Mount? "Give to him that asketh thee." There are a few who try to obey this command; they do it in a half-hearted sort of way; they are, when known, pestered by beggars; and they exert a demoralising and pauperising influence. "Take no thought for the morrow" (Authorised Version). Why, then, do we insure ourselves? Why do we encourage thrift, or educate children? Because we use our own judgment; we do not give these sayings absolute authority. Dr. Magee said at Leicester, in 1889, that "he hoped he would be understood when he said plainly that it was his firm belief that any

Christian State carrying out, in all its relations, the Sermon on the Mount could not exist for a week."

In the Twentieth Article in the Prayer Book the authority proclaimed is the Bible as interpreted by the Church. To interpret the Bible differently from the Church is wrong; but if the Church says what is not in the Bible, the Church is wrong. Doubtless the Church will only say what can be supported by texts; but if a man hold that the texts have another meaning, he holds, too, that the Church is telling him what is not in the Bible. Also, the Anglican Church has lost its voice. And the authority of the Church rests on the Bible, so that that of the Bible cannot rest on the Church. This joint authority is open to the same objections as are the separate authorities.

Thus, no supreme infallible authority can be found. All that a man can do is to make independent inquiry, and extend his inquiries as far as possible. It may often be necessary for him to depend on information and opinions supplied by others; he has to see that knowledge so obtained is consistent with his own experience. Having collected facts, he has to reflect upon them, and, to the best of his ability, draw the conclusions to which they point, as he would in any temporal investigation. The subject considered does not alter the principles of inquiry. It is nonsense to say that spiritual matters are not to be judged like material ones. On any question, spiritual or

material, a man can seek the truth only by searching for information, verifying it, and meditating upon it in order to gather its significance: there is no other way. When preachers say that divine truth is not to be judged like non-religious questions, they are advocating the acceptance of truth on authority. And that means a religion of empty forms. A religion cannot be a man's own until he has questioned it (if he find any reason to question it), has interpreted it by his own experience, and harmonised it thereto. Only thus can it contribute to his soul-life. He must construct his creed by his own thought.

What, then, is the place of authority? Are we not cutting ourselves adrift? Are we not wanting in respect to the past which has produced us? Have not our fathers lived for centuries under the authority of the Church or the Bible? Authority passes on the experience of the past. As children, when the world is still new to us and our experience small, we can only learn many facts by authority. Children naturally trust, and accept what is told them, provided that they are kindly treated. It is impossible for one of them to doubt until some inconsistency forces into his consciousness the idea that his authority may be wrong. The happier they are, the more smoothly things go with them, the longer do they remain in this state of contented submission. But they cannot always remain children; they may, and should, keep the

youthful spirit, but they must not, and cannot, keep the youthful ignorance. As time goes on, everyone finds that there are inconsistencies between different things that he has learnt, and that his instruction has been superficial in greater or less degree. The problems which arise have to be solved by thought.

Authority passes on the experience of others. Besides the natural unconscious acceptance of authority which there is no reason to question, there is the use of "authorities" which we continually make. Our knowledge of geography, history, science, or any other subject, would be extremely small if we could not trust the experts in those subjects. It is impossible to verify everything oneself, and we accept opinions that are agreed upon by the specialists. In legal matters we commonly accept the lawyer's advice, and in questions of bodily health that of the physician. The head of any large organisation depends upon the information supplied by his subordinates. The best results can only be obtained by making use of the work of others. But the head always retains the right to accept or reject the work of his inferiors. He endorses everything, and is responsible for it. And every individual, with regard to his own religion, is in a like position. There he is supreme, and he has to make a final decision on the teaching offered to him. Our trust in the teaching of others is a trust supported by as much

sight as we can obtain. We put confidence in our doctor, but we first choose him. And our confidence in an authority is much increased if it be known that his statements, though we cannot verify them ourselves, are open to verification; if they are proclaimed as resting on facts which anyone may, if he choose, investigate. In such case is the teaching of science, which is accepted without dispute; no reason appears for not accepting the statements of scientific authorities. But it is not so at present with the religious authorities; and it is necessary to fall back upon the individual right of judgment.

In the production of a creed individual thought performs a part merely. A man can only exercise his mind on the material which it possesses; and on this material, which he has gradually assimilated, unconscious of its value at the time of acquisition, his beliefs ultimately depend. His instincts, his education, and circumstances are contributing factors; authority plays an important part. We can only reason from premises, and the nature of our premises determines the results of our reasoning. Our beliefs are produced, for the main part, by causes which may be called non-rational, so far as our own minds are concerned—causes outside the intellect, and beyond our control; ultimately, we believe, merely because nature prompts us to do so. But what reasoning can do is to sift and rearrange the material, to analyse it, and make a new

synthesis more consistent and harmonious. This is the work which the individual has to do: to modify his nominal beliefs, as soon as any suspicion of them occurs to him, until they become again real beliefs for him, representing his complete experience. To his reasoning a man may owe but a small part of his creed, but it is the part which expresses his individuality, the part of supreme importance to the inquirer. Reasoning does not create force (here the force of belief), but the guidance which results in the best use of force. And the work which it can do in this way is so great that it is a most important factor in the supply of power. Bagehot calls it "a victory-making agent of such incomparable efficiency." The intellect is but the instrument which shapes our creed. It transforms credulity into a faith which will stand the test of experience. Reason guides us to what we may consider as authoritative. We do not spend our lives in church, and the lessons taught outside it are not in full agreement with those which are proclaimed from the pulpit. By thought we have to seek which are the truer. By thought a man obeys the command to be perfect. To submit to some particular external authority, when he has reasons against so doing, is to be content with less than the best of which he is capable, to evade a task set him. To be content with the traditions inherited from the past is to give up this pursuit of perfection, the duty of

endeavouring to contribute to the world's progress. By individual judgment difficulties are surmounted, and the truth approached; thus does a man make his creed efficient. He finds the creed which agrees with his *whole* experience, and he obeys the command to love with *all* the mind. That is all, but that is what is essential for him.

While conceding to the individual the right that belongs to him, it may be noted that such right does not imply that he should necessarily differ on important questions from other people. Individuality is not eccentricity. He who differs should be able to account for his difference; he should understand both the truth and the untruth in the old view; why it has been accepted, and what are the imperfections which require that it should be supplanted. But it remains that, having weighed the traditions against his own experience, he may be forced to differ, if he would be sincere. His difference, granted his devotion to truth, is involuntary. He may be right or wrong; but he fulfils his responsibility, and makes the contribution to the world, little or great, which is demanded of him.

Attention is commonly called to the disintegrating effects of individual reasoning, its tendency to result in disagreement and unsettlement. Mr. Balfour writes:—

> Those who have most clamorously upheld the prerogatives of individual reason have always been forced to

> recognise by their practice, if not by their theory, that the right of every man to judge on every question for himself is like the right of every man who possesses a balance at his bankers to require its immediate payment in sovereigns. The right may be undoubted; but it can only be safely enjoyed on condition that too many persons do not take it into their heads to exercise it together.[1]

The exercise of the right depends upon circumstances rather than upon ourselves. In ordinary times it is not necessary to act upon it; but, if we believe that our bankers are in difficulties, we shall demand payment whatever anybody else may be doing. It is the same with beliefs. In most of our practical beliefs we are not conscious of serious want of harmony; they are soundly based, the result of slow evolution, and do not force themselves on our attention. For long periods men may find their creeds sufficiently in accord with their experience to demand no great exercise of private judgment. But when a man finds serious discrepancies between what he sees and what he is taught, and deems the matter an important one, he has to exercise this individual right: the time is ripe for change.

The interaction of Authority and the Individual may be noticed in English history. In mediæval times, when the clergy were educated and everyone else was ignorant of religious matters, the clergy were naturally the instructors of laymen. While they remained more learned and led better lives,

[1] *The Foundations of Belief*, p. 215.

they maintained their position and benefited their fellows. England, no doubt, owes much to its monasteries. But the monks and priests became corrupted; the fact became patent, and it was impossible not to take it into consideration. The question rose inevitably: "Can such authority be trusted?" And each man had to answer for himself; a conscious individual decision became necessary. Then came Wycliffe, Luther, and others, teaching from the authority of the Bible. From what men saw in the Bible, and from what they had been taught about it, they naturally believed it. It met their spiritual needs; there was nothing to suggest doubt. But now again, since the great development of criticism, new facts and doubts have arisen. That the Bible contains truth there is still no doubt; but that its statements can be accepted literally, that it is an accurate historical authority, that it can retain the exclusive position assigned to it by tradition, is open to the gravest objection. Once again, for those who are not blissfully ignorant of the weight of this criticism, a decision is necessary.

That there is but one Truth is pre-supposed by all; and one ultimate Right which is Right for everyone. We are convinced that at bottom the interests of the individual and of society are the same. If private inquiries lead to differences, they lead also towards the unity which heals differences. They unsettle only to find a more stable settlement.

Clearance is only the necessary preliminary to construction. And if individuals are allowed the freedom due to them, the tendency to division expends itself harmlessly. In the lands where free thought is recognised and great freedom of speech allowed, where the individual receives most consideration, society is most stable. It is when natural forces are not allowed their proper vent that they assume harmful proportions. Continual inter-communication, the sharing of experiences, and the benefits of co-operation—all help to bring men into agreement.

In religion we are on the individual's own ground, if we mean by religion something more than outward observance. It is only by individual experience that reality is manifested ; only through that channel that truth and goodness may be apprehended. Distinction must be made between the external representations of religion and its inward significance, its spiritual reality. In externals a man comes into contact with other individuals who have similar rights, which must be respected. And so, as long as men differ from one another, there must outwardly be submission to common authority and curtailment of individual liberty. Conflicting claims have to be adjusted by compromise, and in institutions which concern many change must be slow. A man may not act so freely as he speaks, and he may not speak so freely as he thinks. In action he

has to consider means as well as ends; not only his ideal, but the best way to approach it through a world of opposition. It is, however, in a man's private thought and feeling that the essence of his religion lies. It is there that he makes contact with the divine, and realises the depths of his own nature, and of the nature of the world so far as he can know it. And here there can be no external authority for him; any submission means, in the same degree, loss of life.

To the right of private judgment belongs the necessary complement, the duty of toleration. If these twin principles are recognised, difference of opinion need not mean discord, and opposition in appearance is consistent with unity of spirit.

Christianity, then, cannot be regarded in the light in which the religious authorities apparently expect men to regard it—as a supreme Divine revelation, to be accepted without question. We have to judge for ourselves what Christianity really means, and how much of what is commonly known as Christianity really deserves the name and our recognition. And reason is the only guide. There must be no reservations; for to make reservations means not to give the supreme place to truth, and to block the approach to it. We cannot discover the whole truth; we see many men holding convictions which must be short of the truth, and we cannot hope to have a different fate. All that we can do, and all

that we need wish to do, is to find what will explain our own experience. If others reach honest convictions differing from ours, let them keep them ; we shall not, in all probability, be able to help them, nor they us. We may still offer our assistance to any who are unconvinced and desirous to know, for them to make such use of as they are able.

II.

CHRISTIANITY AND HISTORY

LET these facts be recalled. During the last three centuries the study of history, like that of nature and all other studies, has greatly developed. The recognition that in all investigations the reasoning power is the supreme guide—though in religious matters an exception has been made which has not yet been universally overruled—has caused very great advance both in the quality and extent of all kinds of inquiry. Learning is no longer a mere verbal acquaintance with the opinions of past authorities, but is based on personal experience. In every department old opinions are constantly submitted to inspection, and are retained only if still found efficient—if they are still the best explanations which can be framed. None are admitted which are contradicted by present experience. And the result is continual progress. In history the overhauling process has resulted in many stories being discredited. Strong evidence is found to show that much that was for long believed to be fact is fiction only. Much history has had to be re-written. Its difficulties and uncertainties have been realised; and the result has been the shattering of many an old belief.

This examination has finally been applied to the collection of ancient writings which constitutes the Bible. In these writings many facts are related which seem to contradict present experience. And the question arises: "Did Jesus Christ really live in Palestine some nineteen hundred years ago, and speak and act as the Gospels record?" The Bible, as we have seen, cannot be considered as a supreme authority; that "the Bible says so" does not finally dispose of the question. It is a matter for historical investigation; and a conclusion of any value can only be obtained by an examination according to the best methods known, the methods which have been developed and systematised during the nineteenth century, and are used by those who make the study of historical questions their life-work. For the great majority of men it is necessary to depend upon "authorities," to consider the conclusions arrived at by experts at such work. Very few have the ability or opportunity for such researches. Others have to confine their attention more or less to the results obtained by the specialists—always reserving their own final power of decision, as guided by their own experience. I give some quotations a little later.

What are the conclusions of historical critics on Biblical history? There is not complete agreement. But there is a considerable degree of agreement that it is necessary to regard statements of the Bible very differently from the traditional manner.

Even within the Church this tendency is evident. No longer is it possible to view these records as plain, accurate statements of fact, as unquestionable as, or more so than, say, McCarthy's *History of Our Own Times*. The prevailing note is uncertainty.

And for this uncertainty there is good reason. Even in present concerns difficulty is constantly found in eliciting the truth of an incident, different witnesses persisting in disagreement. Hot dispute arises as to the decision of a referee at a football match. In the courts different witnesses, of whose sincerity there is no question, disagree on points of fact. M. de Plehve was assassinated in the street in broad daylight, but different eye-witnesses made contradictory statements of what happened. Our most honoured statesmen make speeches in which their opponents point out inaccurate statements of fact. There is no need to impute dishonesty. Men can only report what they perceive, and they cannot perceive the whole truth. What they perceive depends upon what they are, upon their knowledge and abilities; and these are limited. Professor Leighton says[1]:—

> It takes a lot of experience and practice to find out who is telling the truth; it also takes a good deal of practice *to be able to tell anything like the truth*.....It has recently been ascertained by a series of experiments on this subject that about ten per cent. of the statements in a spontaneous account are incorrect! Evidence which is quite accurate is the exception; every witness supplies from the imagination what his memory fails to record.

[1] In *Daily Mail*, February 7th, 1905.

How rumour is constantly mistaken for truth, how what is believed to be fact often turns out to be fiction, everyone knows.

And we know what variations a story communicated orally undergoes in its travels. A man hears a story, and his attention is mainly directed to the "point" of the story, its material details receiving minor consideration. And when he re-tells the story these material details are commonly varied. But these variations of detail, by continual repetition of the process, sometimes affect the point of the story. And the point of the story which a man passes on can only be the point which it has for *him*. Among people of the same class this will be commonly the same, or practically the same, for all; but it is not necessarily so. And if the story be of a religious nature it is likely not to be so. There is the question not only of the facts, but of the true significance of the facts.

The difficulties of the present become magnified when we look to the past. It is sufficiently evident that there is continual progress in the world as time goes on: so rapid is it now that one has only to recall one's own youth to realise it. No extended study of history is necessary to make it clear that the state of men to-day is very different to what it was a few hundred years ago. The change in outward conditions is most easily seen; but it is also clear that there has been great change in ideas. In earlier times men had less knowledge

and less power of handling knowledge. They knew not the modern scientist's methods of observation, and of critically checking observations. It is reasonable to suppose that from fifteen to nineteen hundred years ago men's notions of accuracy were more primitive than they are now. And though there were individuals then more refined and clear-headed than many who live now, yet they could not be independent of their environment, and our knowledge of their times depends on the work of men of a lower grade.

It is found that early historians exhibit the characteristic of the story-teller. It is not the cold material facts that they are careful for, but the personal interesting aspect of what they relate. They saw or heard of incidents which made an impression on them, which were to them significant; and their object was to record this impression. J. Cotter Morison writes[1]:—

> Early history is never critical and painstaking in the investigation of facts. Neither the historian nor his readers or hearers have reached a stage of culture in which accuracy is highly valued. Early history is essentially artistic; its object is much more to charm the fancy and warm the emotions than to instruct the understanding. A good story, pathetic or humorous, is appreciated for its own sake independently of its truth. Striking pictures, dramatic situations, often told in dialogue, scenes in which virtue and vice are depicted on a colossal scale—these are the chief objects of the early historical writer, who mingles fact and fiction with the same *naïveté* as his brethren, the writers of the early epos and drama.

[1] *Encyc. Brit.* Article "History."

The impression made on these early writers must in many matters have been very different from what we should now consider the correct significance of the events which they described. To the early Romans, a thunderstorm meant the anger of Jove; to us it is a series of large electric sparks. The Gospel writers talk of men possessed with devils; the scientific man to-day would describe them as epileptic or insane. Ancient history cannot be depended upon as to facts; it indicates rather the kind of man who wrote of them. Harnack says[1]:—

> In history absolute judgments are impossible. This is a truth which in these days—I say advisedly in these days—is clear and incontestable.

The appearance and spread of a story about some celebrity, which has no foundation in fact, but often gains considerable credence, is a familiar enough incident. In the past there were not the same means of contradicting such stories as there are now. About heroes, and in particular about religious leaders when dead, legends, commonly of a miraculous nature, developed. Fitting well with the devotion of the survivors to the departed leader and their belief in his supreme greatness, such legends were naturally accepted as fact, and handed down to succeeding generations as such. It is no easy task for the modern historian to determine what is history and what is myth in the ancient writings.

[1] *What is Christianity?*, p. 18.

There is the further difficulty that generally the original writings of ancient historians no longer exist. Of the original writings copies were made, and these again were copied at a later date. In the continual process of reproduction errors constantly crept in, so that the documents which are open to modern inspection undoubtedly show considerable variation from the originals. The study of history is one especially characterised by the limitations of its means, the great possibilities of error, and the uncertainty of its conclusions.

Of the Biblical narratives, in particular, what is to be said? Anyone can read the book and judge of the moral and spiritual teaching which it contains, but he cannot so judge of the accuracy of its account of events, how far these are history, how far legend or historical novel. These writings can at best only tell us the views of certain men (Mark, John, Paul, etc.) of limited powers who lived at the time. But it is very doubtful if they tell us that. Professor Tyndall said[1]:—

> We have, for example, the canon of Scripture already arranged for us. But to sift and select these writings from the mass of spurious documents afloat at the time of compilation was a work of vast labour, difficulty, and responsibility. The age was rife with forgeries. Even good men lent themselves to these pious frauds, believing that true Christian doctrine—which, of course, was *their* doctrine—would be thereby quickened and promoted. There were gospels and counter-gospels; epistles and counter-epistles—some frivolous, some dull, some

[1] "The Sabbath," *Nineteenth Century*, November, 1880.

speculative and romantic, and some so rich and penetrating, so saturated with the Master's spirit, that, though not included in the canon, they enjoyed an authority almost equal to that of the canonical books. The end being held to sanctify the means, there was no lack of manufactured testimony.

With regard to the opportunities which arise for the entrance of errors in the process of copying documents, I quote from Professor Robertson Smith[1]:—

> The original copies of the New Testament writings were probably written on papyrus rolls, and were so soon worn out by frequent use that we do not possess any historical notice of their existence.....More important than these external matters [titles, subscriptions, etc.] are the variations which in course of time crept into the text itself. Many of these variations are mere slips of eye, ear, memory, or judgment on the part of a copyist, who had no intention to do otherwise than follow what lay before him. But transcribers, and especially early transcribers, by no means aimed at that minute accuracy which is expected of a modern critical editor. Corrections were made in the interests of grammar or of style, slight changes were adopted in order to remove difficulties, additions came in, especially from parallel narratives in the gospels, citations from the Old Testament were made more exact or more complete. That all this was done in perfect good faith, and simply because no strict conception of the duty of a copyist existed, is especially clear from the almost entire absence of deliberate falsification of the text in the interests of doctrinal controversy. To detail all the sources of various readings would be out of place; it may suffice to mention, in addition to what has been already said, that *glosses*, or notes originally written on the margin, very often ended by being taken into the text, and that the custom of

[1] *Encyc. Brit.* Article "Bible."

reading the Scriptures in public worship naturally brought in liturgical additions, such as the doxology of the Lord's Prayer; while the commencement of an ecclesiastical lesson torn from its proper context had often to be supplemented by a few explanatory words, which soon came to be regarded as part of the original.

When it is realised what a maze of various possibilities is opened by the study of history, how numerous are the ways in which errors may arise, and what weight of opinion there is among modern historical critics to reject the claim that the Biblical books narrate plain history, it is impossible to found one's religion on a conviction of the literal truth of its story. Those who study the ancient documents may come to some opinion on what the truth of the matter is after a nice weighing of "pros" and "cons." If such opinion be based on unprejudiced investigation, actuated solely by the desire to learn the truth, it can hardly amount to more than a belief that it is a rather more probable explanation than any other. About such an opinion there can be nothing like certainty. If ministers point out that some distinguished investigator supports their view of the Bible, it means only that his searching and weighing have resulted in an inclination of the balance to that side. No less dependable authorities are found who take the opposite view. And the greater weight of opinion among historical critics is assuredly against the traditional view. No man who is aware of the slender foundation on which that view rests can base his religion upon it.

With regard to the Old Testament, there is a growing opinion even among clerics that it is necessary to take a new view. But it is with the New Testament that I am concerned, and that the same necessity applies to that seems to me an unavoidable conclusion.

That the story of the Gospels could not have been invented without a model from life can hardly be doubted; what is the proportion between fact and fable in these accounts cannot be decidedly ascertained. There are certain incidents related—*e.g.*, the Virgin-birth (to which I refer later)—which seem, almost certainly, to be untrue. We do not believe in the incidents recorded of the Roman and Greek gods. We do not believe in the Virgin-birth and other supernatural events related of Buddha. We ought to be able to show good cause for believing in the similar occurrences related of Jesus.

There is an argument of a different nature—an argument from personal experience—which is brought forward in support of the traditional view of the historical accuracy of the Gospels. Persons have, through reading the Bible or hearing of it and believing its truth, been led to spiritual experiences of faith and self-surrender which have influenced their lives to the core and completely changed their characters. So they are convinced of the literal historical truth of what they have read. Critics may say what they will, but they

cannot affect these people, who know, by their own individual experience, the truth of the Bible. Dr. Smith writes[1]: "The Scriptures themselves make appeal to another than the critical sense. They address that in man which fronts God. By what they discover to the human soul on that plane, by what they work in and through human life, are they to be judged." It is in this way that their spiritual value is to be judged in so far as that is independent of their particular material details; it is not thus that their historical accuracy can be ascertained. Their moral results to-day prove nothing as to the water turned into wine, or the Virgin-birth. The two matters are, as the writer hints, on different planes. Subjective experience and objective truth are not to be confused together; they are necessary to one another, but they are not the same thing. These faith-experiences are the result of the belief; they do not prove that the object of belief is really true. Said Paracelsus: "Whether the object of your faith be true or false, you will, nevertheless, obtain the same effects." A woman reads an official report that her husband at the war has been killed, and she is plunged into anguish; the report may, nevertheless, be untrue. A man believes his friend faithful to him, and he is happy; that does not prove his confidence is well-founded, and there may be a time coming when he will be undeceived. A man is powerfully affected by his

[1] *The Integrity of Scripture*, p. 15.

imagination, whether or no his imaginings accord with fact. Any doctor could tell of patients benefited by treatment whose efficacy lay solely in that it raised and supported the patient's confidence. Dr. Bernheim[1] tells of a patient who suffered from a paralysis of the tongue, and who, after having for long endeavoured in vain to find a remedy, put himself under the care of a certain doctor. "The doctor wished to try an instrument of his own invention, with which he promised to get excellent results. Before performing the operation, he introduced a pocket thermometer into the patient's mouth. The patient imagined it to be the instrument which was to save him; in a few minutes he cried out joyfully that he could once more move his tongue freely." We may even be roused to enthusiasm by a tale avowedly fiction—that is the purpose of dramatic representation. Such a tale must be true in spirit; but our feeling arises, though we know that it is not true as material history.

In the last chapter emphasis was laid on the fact that truth can only be approached by personal experience. All that a man can do is to construct the creed to which his experience as a whole directs him. And the "evangelical" who takes his view of Christianity from his own experience does this; he fulfils his own possibilities. But a man's experience does not tell him the whole truth. He

[1] *Suggestive Therapeutics*, p. 197.

has no right to assume that his own experience sums up the possibilities of experience—that there can be no wider knowledge than his own. His experience is no authority for other men, and he has no right to dictate to them. If the inquirer observe, as far as he can, the men of the time who seem to be most earnest and experienced, to have the widest knowledge, not only extensively but intensively, he does not find any great support for this personal argument for the historical truth of the New Testament. And if his own experience do not support it, it can be nothing to him.

Also experiences similar to the "conversion" experiences have been known without any hearing of the Gospel story. Instances are given by Professor Stahrbück, whose conclusions I quote later. Experiences of faith, joy, ecstasy, are not confined to Christians. Men of other opinions live happily and die happily in complete assurance of the security of their souls. Professor James says[1]:—

> Professor Leuba is undoubtedly right in contending that the conceptual belief about Christ's work, although so often efficacious and antecedent, is really accessory and non-essential, and that the "joyous conviction" can also come by far other channels than this conception.

These experiences do not demonstrate the historical truth of the Gospels.

But the uncertainty which envelopes ancient historical incidents does not render the study of

[1] *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 246.

history valueless. That the events of the past have not been chance occurrences, but the outward signs of an animating principle, and have been rationally related to one another by cause and consequence, becomes more and more clear. That the world undergoes a continual evolution, that the surface of things is constantly changing in obedience to an inherent unchanging principle, becomes increasingly certain. There is increase of knowledge, greater power of discernment, spread of refinement, a growing complexity and variety in outward forms, accompanied by a growing perception that they are pervaded by one spirit. We find men, their customs, society, religion, all making a slow progress as time goes on—a progress wave-like rather than uniform, but clearly perceptible. There is a visible evolution of religion in the Bible. There has been a distinct progress of religious opinion during the last half-century. The study of history shows very clearly that current beliefs always fall short of the truth, that there must necessarily be changes in all creeds and forms. In the Bible we find a long warfare between the prophet and the priest—between the man who looks into the essential nature of religion and the man who is the representative of current orthodoxy. The latter assumes that he is the possessor of the truth, the former points out the priest's inadequacy; and posterity sees that the prophet had the truer view. The priest is part of a material institution;

his nature grows steadily more conservative, and he becomes finally a drag and a hinderer in the search for truth and right.

The study of the past indicates the probable developments of the future—it helps to interpret the signs of the times; and all the indications show that the future must mean change, not only in outward customs, but also in ideas and creeds. And that study does not encourage us to place trust in the opinion of the priest. If it causes a loss of certainty, doubts as to the occurrence of incidents which have been considered historical, it gives a greater certainty that the world is a rational system governed by laws which may be discovered, and by conformity to which we may assist our proper development. It is, indeed, just this stronger belief in the continuity and intelligibility of things that has induced the scientific investigator to discard the old beliefs. As alchemy gave way to chemistry, and astrology to astronomy, so supernatural religion, based on the authority of the past, is giving way to rational religion founded on the experience of the present.

Historical criticism shows emphatically the weakness of the traditional historical basis of Christianity. This result I believe to be very satisfactory. It is leading the way to a clearer perception of the nature of religion, and moreover to a better understanding of Christ.

III.

BELIEF

On account, in part, of the historical criticism of the Bible, there has been during recent decades a decline in interest in the creed and observances which are founded on the supposition that the Biblical stories relate literal history. And so there comes from the pulpits, among other accusations against the present age, one of a "decline in faith." What is faith? What does a man mean when he says "I believe"? The many who repeat the words weekly do not all mean the same by them. Belief admits of degrees; and there may be distinguished, I think, four different significations for which it is used by one or another. "I believe this" may be equivalent to:—

I *know* (am certain) that this is *the* truth.

I am convinced that this is the truth, so far as it is possible for me to know it.

I am of opinion (more or less strong) that this is true.

I assent (merely) that this is true.

The first meaning is that of the ignorant and bigoted, who are unaware of their own limitations, and consider that their own view, being evident to themselves, must, therefore, necessarily be the

real objective truth. It is the Newtons who understand how infinitesimal is their own knowledge. I can be certain (in an absolute sense) of no definite truth. When a man talks in the ordinary way of being certain of any matter, he means (or should mean) only that it is in complete accord with his experience. The certainty is relative to him. If he says that he is certain that the clock has just struck, he means that, according to his presuppositions, his accepted notions about striking, and his power of hearing, the statement is true. It is a "practical certainty," sufficient to the purposes of this life. But he cannot know the whole truth, and his senses may deceive him. A hypnotised man sees or does not see things according to the suggestions made to him. We cannot demonstrate that we are not hypnotic patients of some higher spirit; and, indeed, I suppose that that may be a description of our condition, in that we have been produced and are limited by a higher power than ourselves. It happens that one person asserts his complete certainty of a fact which another is equally certain is false, both in all sincerity; it is impossible that both these "certainties" be true. Do not our eyes tell us as plainly as possible that the sun goes round the earth daily? And yet we do not now believe that. And if even the evidence of our sense be not completely authoritative, much less can we reach absolute certainty in regard to questions of what happened hundreds of years ago,

or of what will happen in the future. The universe is like an infinite algebraical series of which a few terms representing our experience may be said to be known to us.

> With reference to series (says Charles Smith) in which the law is not given, but only a certain number of terms of the series, it is of importance to remark that in *no case can the actual law of the series be really determined:* all that can be done is to find the *simplest law* the few terms which are given will obey.[1]

The fundamental truths of the universe are not known to us; all that can be done is to find the *simplest explanations* that experience will support. Beyond all the criticisms of historians, there are deeper reasons in the nature of things why we can have no solid foundation to our beliefs. Our knowledge, like the earth we stand on, is a mass limited on all sides, without solid basis. The ancient notion that the earth was supported by a tortoise has been given up, and the present notion that religion has a material foundation and basis of authority in certain historical facts of the first century must go in like manner.

In Chapter I. the necessity of individual judgment to obtain real beliefs was dwelt upon; in the present connection it is to be emphasised conversely that real beliefs are of individual origin, subject to the limitations of individuals, and that they fall short of universal truth. Not to take the creed of some

[1] C. Smith, *Algebra*, p. 413.

Church and, asserting its absolute truth, to denounce all other views, but to construct one's own belief and then recognise its incompleteness, is the true attitude. Faith is not knowledge.

The second sense of "believe" is the legitimate one of the religious enthusiast, the man whose views are completely harmonious, whether as the result of his never having had doubts, or of his having been able to solve them to his entire satisfaction. Such belief combines strength and toleration. The possession of such a belief naturally impels the holder to seek to pass it on to other men. But he recognises that his position in so doing is not that of a judge, but of a witness only.

The third sense is that of the man who has not yet solved all the difficulties—who is not convinced. Such belief varies in degree from the zero of evenly-balanced "pros" and "cons" up to the state of conviction. So long as a view is not proved to a man to be impossible, he may, if it commend itself to him, believe it in this way. But it is a belief that has not been proved untrue, not one that has been proved true.

The fourth sense is not really belief, but lip-service which covers indifference or incomprehension, or possibly, if the assertion is made under pressure, disbelief. It is the meaning of the man who recites a creed (such as the Athanasian Creed) which he does not understand or has in no way verified. Perhaps he thinks that his relations with

a Spirit God are like his relations with a fellow-man, and that, because a verbal assent and outward conformity will commonly satisfy the latter, it will therefore also satisfy the former. Perhaps he is merely thoughtless, and says it parrot-like. Or he may say it untruthfully to avoid importunity or persecution. Anyway, such so-called belief is valueless spiritually to him who professes. And the association of the word "believe" with such professions is entirely harmful.[1]

A belief in a historical Christianity, for anyone who founds his belief on objective historical evidence, and who comprehends the nature and difficulties of historical research, cannot amount to more than an opinion more or less strong. And to many the "cons" appear to overbalance the "pros," and they are obliged to reject the traditional view. History will not provide conviction.

To the clergy this result seems disastrous, and the advice has often been given from the pulpit that one should not listen to suggestions of doubt, or read books which ventilate doubts; in fact, that one should suppress doubt, and strive to believe. If given to the old, such advice will probably be superfluous; to the young it may be compared to screwing down a safety-valve, driving a fever

[1] I think that, under modern conditions, the Athanasian Creed is well typified by "The Emperor's New Clothes." Men of position say that they believe it for the same reason as men said they saw the clothes—because they deem it expedient to do so. It takes, as with the clothes, a simple mind to point out how little there is in it.

inwards, or building on rotten foundations. Doubt is opposed to action, and when a man is in the thick of serious action it is important that he be not troubled by misgiving. Hence the importance of forming as soon as possible sound beliefs which will not totter and betray him when he comes to act upon them. And one can only form sound beliefs by testing them with every possible objection. If a man would not be troubled by doubt, let him doubt his utmost. He gains an immense advantage by taking the initiative, and meeting the enemy on his own ground. The author of *A Defence of Philosophic Doubt* is noted for the serenity of his character. What would not "Robert Elsmere" have given to have fairly met his doubts a few years earlier, when he might have chosen a different career? To have to alter one's view or suspend one's judgment may mean being for a time in an uncomfortable position; but to attempt to retain a belief in spite of objections is to put oneself into a false position.

The doubts in question are but material doubts concerning the truth of certain old and definite dogmas. To be afraid of them is to indicate a much deeper spiritual doubt of the ultimate unity and goodness of the universe—a doubt of God. Agnostics and freethinkers show their faith by their honesty; it is these fearful deprecators of the search for truth who are the "unbelievers." It is dangerous, say some, to be a freethinker.

Dangerous to use the God-given talent of thinking? It is, no doubt; but it is safer than remaining in the house on the sand when the tide is rising. Such men will be able to answer in the words of the parable: "Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown and gathering where thou hast not strawed: And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: Thou oughtest, therefore, to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received my own with usury. Take, therefore, the talent from him." Thought is given men that they may take their creeds to the exchanges for discussion and modification, and bring them back re-stated and extended; that they may gain knowledge by their activity. The fear to give full consideration to doubts is the fear of the miser that, if his accumulations pass out of his immediate possession, he will lose their value; for him the value lies in the solid material, instead of in the powers which it symbolises.

To *try* to believe means that a man must represent to himself that some creed contains more truth than his mind seems able to accord to it. Because a certain view is held to have beneficial consequences for the man who holds it, he is to endeavour

to hold it, instead of trusting to the result of a simple search for truth. But this means putting belief before right belief. In Chapter I. I said that the important matter was that a man's belief should as completely as possible fit his experience. From an external point of view it is the believing that is more important to him spiritually than the truth of the belief, for nobody can know the whole truth; but from his own standpoint it is the truth of the belief which matters, for it is only that which can produce real belief for him. Trying to believe means constructing a creed from a portion only of one's experience. A man sees, say, that belief in a certain creed has good results for some other people, so he endeavours to make it his own, although some portions of his own experience contradict it. In so doing he sacrifices his own individuality, he (at least in a degree) loses his soul, he throws away the chance of discovery with which those recalcitrant elements provide him, if he would seek to reconcile them. It was the perturbations of Uranus which led to the discovery of Neptune.

To try to believe means not to allow one's belief to grow up naturally and spontaneously in the mind, but to start an artificial growth. A man cannot from his consciousness create his own belief, any more than he can determine his bodily stature. All that he can do for his body is to eat digestible food and take exercise; all that he can do for his mind is to live and learn; the result is

determined for him. The only true foundation of belief is intuition. The right use of the mind is to examine, arrange, and co-relate its contents until satisfaction, which is not to be commanded, appears. A real belief is one which so satisfies a man's experience that he cannot help believing it; a conviction is so completely voluntary that it is involuntary.

Men have, no doubt, derived encouragement from the unquestioning belief that the gospels related only historic facts. Illusion is often of value. "We are led," said F. W. Robertson, "through life as we are allured upon a journey. Could a man see his route before him—a flat straight road, unbroken by bush or tree or eminence, with the sun's heat burning down upon it, stretched out in dreary monotony—he could scarcely find energy to begin his task; but the uncertainty of what may be seen beyond the next turn keeps expectation alive." Life is a continual advance: and to advance means to be disillusioned. "Religious" people seem to look upon critics as wanton destroyers of beliefs. It is inevitable progress that brings about the destruction. It is impossible to stand still, at least in Europe; and we can hardly believe that such stagnation as that of the Chinese civilisation ought to be imitated. New knowledge forces those who are open to conviction to modify the opinions they held previously. Life is not given for repose; the time of rest

will come soon enough; our work—while it is yet day—is to be continually rebuilding what time destroys. The life of our bodies is a continual replacement of old material by new; spiritual life is the same. When the old is not being sufficiently replaced by new, then life is dwindling; that is what is happening to the Churches, hence their decline in influence. If new knowledge destroys the old beliefs, it provides the material for new ones. Edward Caird says[1]: "To those who regret the implicit faith of an earlier day, which is gradually leaving us, it may be suggested that, useful as such extraneous supports have been in the past, they never were really the essence of the matter; and, though it might be necessary, in the slow education of man's spirit, for him to lean upon them, yet there is always a heavy price to be paid for the strength which is gained partly by illusion."

Spiritual faith, the simple trust that life is something real, and that at the bottom of things all is well and true; the belief that things are related and continuous, so that it is worth while to think and act; the implicit faith which leads the man of science to devote himself to research and gives the man of action energy for his cause—this is the faith which is indispensable to us, and which survives the changes wrought by time. All dogmas, systems, religions of authority, including

[1] *Evolution of Religion*, vol. ii., p. 317.

a material Christianity, pass away, for all these are but shrines of faith. Unfortunately, mortal men confuse the symbol for the reality. The clergy complain of materialism; but to consider their dogmas as essential, as many do, is itself materialism and idolatry. The beam wants attention first. Complaint is also made of a general lack of faith. If that means a real lack of seriousness in life (though it is not clear that such lack exists markedly), it may be due to the increasing failure of the old creeds to give satisfaction; and, faith having been so closely bound up with them, the decay of the letter has been accompanied by some disheartenment of spirit. This emphasises concretely the danger of asserting certainty of definite creeds, of confusing belief with knowledge, or tampering with truth for the sake of present convenience. The chemist is not disconcerted when doubt is thrown on the atomic theory, because, although it has been a cardinal doctrine for a long time, he has always recognised its theoretical nature. And if men would not in religious matters make-believe that they know when they do not know, would not identify spiritual faith with some material creed, the inevitable decay of the latter would produce no evil result. If by lack of faith is meant only a decreasing trust in the old creeds, then such lack is to be regarded as a hopeful sign that men are thinking for themselves and endeavouring to make their religion real. The

Agnostic merely admits honestly that he has no knowledge about matters beyond his experience. He makes the confession of ignorance, which is the first step necessary to remedy the deficiency. No one is without some sort of belief. Leslie Stephen wrote[1]: "Explain as we may, or regard it as inexplicable, we have thoughts and sensations, pains and pleasures, a solid earth to live upon, and fellow-men to love and hate, to rule, to obey, or to help. How to regulate our lives and what end to pursue is a problem for which we all have to find some tolerable solution. What creed will give us the clearest rules, and reduce the inevitable uncertainty to a minimum?" So-called "unbelievers" have their own beliefs, one of the most important tenets being commonly the sacredness of the pursuit of truth and the importance of intellectual honesty. But, having clearer sight, and being more free from prejudices than the men who denounce them, they are unable to remain content with the traditional dogmas. The logical thinker disbelieves the traditions because he has a much stronger faith in the reasonableness of things. He refers everything ultimately to his own experience, and finds a surer ground than priest or manuscript. He tests all his conclusions by doubting them to the utmost, and thus builds up a faith with the firmest possible foundations. Mr. Bradley,

[1] *Scepticism of Believers.*

towards the end of *Appearance and Reality*, says: "Beyond all doubt, then, it is clear that Reality is one" (p. 522). That is the belief of a sceptic, and one of great significance. A belief thus tested by doubt is of value; creeds swallowed whole at Sunday school are worth nothing.

Scepticism is essential to the pursuit of truth. It is by doubting old explanations and suggested new ones that deeper conclusions are reached. To distrust all appearances, and to believe that they rest on a real foundation, is the mental attitude of the inquirer. Doubt is opposed to action, but belief is opposed to thought. Is thinking so inferior to acting? Some have held the opposite. A complete human life must contain both thought and action, and must, therefore, contain elements both of faith and of doubt; the more thoughtful a man is, the greater will be the element of doubt. Thought may become a malady, but the lack of it is perhaps a greater evil.

There has been much talk of a conflict between science and religion. Truth cannot be in conflict with itself.[1] The content of absolute truth, however, cannot be attained; it is approached from different directions, and there are collisions on the way. What have been called the truths of science and of religion, respectively, have been partial, incomplete truths, and it is these which have come

[1] I do not think that this needs qualification here; I have no intention of entering metaphysical mazes.

into opposition. We exist in a world of more or less discordant experiences, and the attempt to solve the theoretical disagreements provides the material for thought. Thought must have symbols to work with, so the objects of consciousness are denoted by names, and relations are sought between them. All that can be done is to find the simplest laws which the phenomena in question will obey. And these laws constitute the science of the time. Science approaches truth from the objective side—from the surface of things. Its point of view is external and impersonal. Religion approaches from the subjective side; its view is inward and personal, and its basis is the feelings and intuitions of the individual. But subject and object are not really separable. All knowledge of objects depends upon intuitions of time, space, force, and so on. Science is constructed on a foundation of intuitive pre-suppositions. On the other hand, without objective phenomena there could be no consciousness of these intuitions. If scientists hold materialistic views, and theologians teach illogical doctrines, then there is conflict; but it is a conflict between false theories, between bad science and bad religion rather than between science and religion. There may be dispute between what passes for science or religion at some particular period, but that is just because the views on either side are incomplete. Such was the nature of the dispute of the nineteenth century, and

out of it comes good by the bringing up of hidden errors to the surface. Theologians have to learn that, in so far as they are concerned with knowledge, when they theorise about objects and events, they are on scientific ground, and must conform to scientific method; their doctrines must be logical, and not opposed to present experience. Religion must no longer find its ultimate support in the authority of the past: it must not confuse subjective belief with objective knowledge, and the two must not be contradictory, for they are interdependent: it is responsible for making full use of all material supplied by science.

A better description of the present dispute is that it is just a part of the eternal war of progress, the opposition between the past and the future, the old and the young, the possessor and the seeker. The adherents of "religion" (as opposed to science and freethought) represent the old school; they have their own views, and dread lest they should be displaced; they distrust the restless inquirer who examines what they hold as sacred, and they fear that relaxation of authority means outbreak of licence; they cannot understand change in what has been to them the most solid fixture. They imagine that they are fighting for religion; in reality, the contest is over their "traditions," which are attacked as no longer deserving to hold the position they claim, no longer efficient for the cause which they profess to serve.

I have used the word "religion" to represent what religion stands for to the human soul—faith, love, truth, law, all those fundamental feelings and ideas about life and death which constitute the essence of religion, and which are represented in various terms by the different traditional religious systems—Christianity, Buddhism, and so forth. They are not dependent on the authority of any of those systems, and may be based on present experience. But by what are ordinarily called religious people the meaning of the word is confined to these traditional systems founded on the authority of a Person who lived long ago. In England it is confined practically to one of the recognised forms of Christianity. With these traditional systems science certainly has a controversy, and one which (it is not too much to say) must end in victory.

IV.

JESUS AND HIS AUTHORITY

IT was concluded in Chapter I. that we could not look on Christianity as a supernatural revelation, having supreme authority over our own judgment, and independent of our reason. And in Chapter II. the impossibility of an unhesitating acceptance of the gospel narrative as pure historic fact was emphasised. Every man must be the supreme authority for himself. And yet Jesus, as depicted in the Gospels, may still be regarded as a great authority. I believe the whole weight of that authority is on the side of Rationalism and Free-thought. What is commonly called Christian teaching is so only in name, and does not accord with the character of Jesus as the Gospels show it.

What view must we take of the nature of Jesus, and what is his own teaching, according to the Gospels, concerning the use of private judgment and as to his own nature and authority? What attitude would he wish men to take towards himself and his words?

On one occasion it is written that John the Baptist sent two disciples to Jesus, asking him who he was. There is no dogmatic answer, but—

> Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and show

> John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.[1]

An appeal is made to John's own judgment; he was to look at the facts and decide for himself. At another time the Pharisees and Sadducees came and asked for a sign from Heaven to indicate his authority. But—

> He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. And in the morning, It will be foul weather to-day: for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times? A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign.[2]

They could reason about temporal matters, and they ought, he says, to reason about him. It was their duty to make use of the data which they possessed. Religion and divine questions were to be investigated like any others. They wanted a supernatural religion; he offers them a rational one. Not something apart from ordinary life, but to be judged by the common standards. Not an arbitrary code or meaningless abstraction, but something logical, whose basis was to be not his authority, but their experience.

When Jesus taught, he did not merely dictate, but reasoned. He educated in a real sense, continually asking questions and illustrating his

[1] Matt. xi. 4, 5, 6. [2] *Ibid*, xvi. 2, 3, 4.

teaching by material analogies, that his hearers might really understand and freely accept it, not take it on trust from himself. Not to his authority, but to their experience, the appeal was made :—

> Behold the fowls of the air.....Are ye not much better than they ?
>
> What man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone ?
>
> Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles ?[1]

No wonder that he appeared to the people to teach them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes, and that they heard him gladly. They could see the point of what he taught. It would seem that our modern teachers of Christianity show too often a greater resemblance to the scribes.

In the frequent use he made of the parable there is the same recognition that he was dealing with thinking beings, and the same direction to spiritual truths in and by the natural world. When the disciples asked him why he taught in parables he replied :—

> Whosoever hath, to him shall be given.
>
> Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.[2]

He knew that there can be no external revelation ; that to reveal anything to a man is only to show him something a little deeper in himself ; that every man must be the supreme authority for his own soul.

When he disputed with his adversaries, there was the same rational procedure. The Pharisees

[1] Matt. vi. 26 ; vii. 9, 16. [2] *Ibid*, xiii. 9, 12.

blamed him for healing on the Sabbath Day. He said :—

> What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the Sabbath Day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep?[1]

It is not because they oppose him, but because they oppose truth and right; it is their ignorance, blindness, and cruelty that he denounces. He confutes them on their own ground.

In another chapter is a passage which may be commended to the consideration of any who still believe in "verbal inspiration" :—

> Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread. Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread? Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.[2]

What was the mistake of the disciples? That they had understood his words literally! Could we find a more decided pronouncement against thoughtless acceptance of his teaching? In questions of doctrine the appeal of Jesus is to the individual

[1] Matt. xii. 11. [2] *Ibid*, xvi. 6–12.

perception and understanding; and he condemns the unreasoning acceptance of traditions. The Pharisees came and asked him why his disciples did not act according to the tradition of the elders, and his reply was a vehement attack on their traditions :—

> Laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do. And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition.

And directly afterwards he greets his disciples with :—

> Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive?[1].....

The teaching of Jesus is essentially rational and scientific in character. Individual experience is the only door to truth, and Jesus was the champion of the individual; and yet his authority has for hundreds of years been the excuse for suppressing the individual! The law of Moses suffered at the hands of the scribes and elders, and the law of Jesus has suffered still more from those who believe themselves to be his disciples.

It is true that in the Fourth Gospel there is apparently a considerable display of authority. We read such assertions as :—

> I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me.....I am the light of the world.....I am that bread of life.

[1] Mark vii. 8, 9, 18.

All teachers dogmatise sometimes. It is necessary, on occasion, to be concise; it is often more convenient to tell a conclusion than to elicit it by questioning. And was it not natural that Jesus, conscious of the spiritual message he had to deliver, and of his superiority to all the teachers of the Jews, should sometimes have spoken of himself as is recorded in this Gospel, using the words in a poetic, not a supernatural, sense? Doctors and teachers know the advantage to them of a confident, masterful, self-assertive manner. When men are ill and depressed they trust in the man with assurance. He must speak in a tone of authority. But it is presupposed that there is good reason to trust him. It is to be expected that Jesus, the spiritual healer and teacher, would, on occasion, assume an authoritative, self-assertive tone.

From a critical point of view, the Fourth Gospel is the least satisfactory. But here, too, he bases his authority on the perception and reason of his hearers.

> If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true..... The works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me.[1]
>
> If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not.[2]

Belief in him was to be founded on their own observation and inference. Anyone could hear his words and see his deeds, and might judge, as John the

[1] John v. 31, 36. [2] *Ibid*, x. 37.

Baptist had been directed to judge. Condemnation was for those only who did not live up to their own light.

> Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust.[1]
>
> If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth.[2]

Thus Jesus condemned the pretence of complacent certainty where there is no certainty, and supports the position of the Agnostic.

When he directed attention to himself it was as a means only. He calls those his disciples who are good and true and seek God, not those who take some laudatory view about himself.

> By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.[3]
>
> Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.[4]

In the parable of "the sheep and the goats" Jesus speaks of the righteous as having been unconscious of serving his personal self. "Inasmuch," he says, "as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

In considering the nature of the person of Jesus it may be remembered that nothing is really made more sacred by being regarded in a superstitious manner, and that Jesus courted inquiry about

[1] John v. 45.
[2] *Ibid*, ix. 41.
[3] *Ibid*, xiii. 35.
[4] Matt. vii. 21.

himself. What is to be said as to the nature of his divinity? It is easy to repeat that "Jesus is God"; but what does that mean? "No man hath seen God at any time."

It is, I think, intended in the first place to signify that Jesus was a perfect man, and so a supreme authority to guide us and a representation of the ideal for us to love. But a perfect man is a contradiction in terms. A man is essentially a limited and progressive being, who learns and strives; a being who is perfect fails to hold an essential qualification for manhood. As men become more careful and clear in their thinking, it becomes more and more evident that the notion of perfection materialised is an impossibility.

It is usual for a biographer to dwell on the greatness rather than on the weak points of his hero, and it is doubtful if the writers of the Gospels would have recorded imperfections of Jesus if they had seen them. And it is still more doubtful if they would have seen them, if they existed; for men are blind to flaws in those to whom they are devoted. Also, a biography can never delineate completely the character of its subject: it can only exhibit a few characteristics. However, we read in the Gospels that Jesus developed like other men; like others, he learnt, listening to the doctors and asking them questions; "he increased in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man." When, then, did his wisdom become infinite?

Growth is always gradual, a progressive increase by finite (or, rather, infinitesimal) increments.

Is perfection necessary to evoke love in others? I think rather that it is essential that omnipotence and omniscience should be absent. It is the loving, seeking spirit that inspires love in others. And complete attainment means that search is at an end. It is not so much attainments that call forth love as the aspiring spirit. This they sometimes serve to indicate, but it is sometimes not in any considerable degree accompanied by them. The young are loved as much as the old, but they are certainly further off omniscience. It is the loving spirit of Jesus that has made men love him, not any doctrine of perfection. He is loved as a man, not as a God. And, as to the matter of his authority, it has been seen that for every man the supreme authority must be his own soul.

Thus, the doctrine becomes in practice useless. It is a tradition the objections to which are growing more and more weighty. If it has been a support to faith, it is, nevertheless, itself a matter of faith; and it is now becoming rather a burden than a support. The doctrine is meant, I suppose, to state that Jesus was an exception to the doctrine of original sin. But this latter (which is referred to in Chapter IX.) I conclude to be both un-Christian and—because it expresses a portion of the truth badly—untrue.

The doctrine that "Jesus is God" is, I think,

bound up with the ordinary anthropomorphic conception of God—the conception which is suggested, for instance, by the parable of the Wicked Husbandmen. God is looked upon as a perfect omniscient individual, of intangible substance perhaps, but of human form, a Great King, who lives far off in a place called Heaven, though he sees all that goes on in this world, and will one day come and judge us. And, God being considered a person, the divinity of Jesus is naturally interpreted as meaning that he bears a special relationship to that individual, as in the parable. He is conceived as completely representing God, the Great King, bringing us subjects a message of goodwill and instructions for ensuring entry to heaven when we die. The view that Jesus is God is supplementary to the view that God is a Person —*i.e.*, a kind of man. No two men can have precisely the same idea of the nature of God ; but this description is, I think, typical. The view implies that the nature of Jesus was supernatural. The objections to this anthropomorphic conception and to supernaturalism are considered in the next chapter.

It is stated that the nature of Jesus was entirely different from that of all other men, because he was born of a virgin. But this story is now discredited. Professor Gardner says :—

> As regards historic grounds it may be shown :
>
> (1) That the narratives in which the birth is spoken of are, as historic documents, very unsatisfactory.

(2) That the tale of a miraculous birth was not generally accepted by the first Christians.

(3) That the tale would have arisen, in all probability, whether true or not.....

.....The Gospel of Mark is almost universally allowed to be the earliest of the Gospels. Not only does the writer omit all mention of the Virgin-birth, but, beginning his work with the baptism of John, he uses the very significant phrase, "The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ." Also he records sayings and doings which cannot be reconciled with belief in a supernatural birth. For example, he says that at the beginning of the ministry of Jesus his mother and his brethren sought to restrain him as one out of his mind. Now, it seems almost impossible that Mark can have represented the mother of Jesus as doubting of his mission, if he accepted the tale of the miraculous birth.

The author of the Fourth Gospel appears to have known of the story of the Virgin-birth. Indeed, at the time when he wrote it must have been known generally. But he seems to have slighted it, and preferred another view, which cannot but be regarded as more spiritual.....

.....He puts in the mouth of Jesus a statement of a high law which is fatal to the acceptance of a virgin birth. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit."....

.....Perhaps a nearer parallel to the birth stories of Christianity than can be found either in Greek or Hebrew records may be discovered in a remarkable series of legends which clustered about the birth of Augustus, giving him as a father not Octavius, but Apollo..... Even for the episode of Simeon and Anna there is a parallel.....

.....I am convinced, from observation of what has happened in Prussia—where in 1846 the Church Synod rejected this tenet—and from what is going on among ourselves, that this particular view is absolutely doomed by the progress of historic research. It is like a spar

> which has been riddled with shot, and the wisest as well as the most honest plan is to try to rid the ship of its weight.[1].....

With such arguments before one, and in the absence of anything like superior argument to the contrary, it is impossible to place any confidence in the truth of the story of the Virgin-birth, or consider it of any value in estimating the nature of Jesus.

The question of Jesus' divinity is given direct consideration in a passage in the Fourth Gospel which is quoted and commented on by Rev. H. L. Wild in *Contentio Veritatis*:—

> "The Jews answered him, saying, For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because Thou, being a man, makest Thyself God. Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are Gods? If he called them gods, unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken: say ye of Him whom the Father hath sanctified, and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest: because I said, I am the Son of God?" The name of "God" had been actually applied to those who received the divine revelation under the old dispensation. Why, then, should the title which He now chose be held to be blasphemous? The passage shows as clearly as any Jesus' view of His own sonship, as well as of that of His disciples. In fact, though He regards Himself as being the Son of God in a special sense, yet the disciples also are "of God."[2]

[1] *Exploratio Evangelica.* Extracts from chap. xix.

[2] *Contentio Veritatis*, p. 159. The Old Testament reference is Psalm lxxxii. 6. "I have said, Ye are Gods; and all of you are children of the most High." In Exod. xxii. 28 it is written: "Thou shalt not revile the Gods [*margin* Judges], nor curse the ruler of thy people."

Jesus taught all to address God as "Our Father." He said:—

> And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.[1]
>
> Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.[2]

He taught that he was divine, but he taught also that we are all divine. It is true that there is a passage in the Fourth Gospel—the well-known verse—in which the words "*only* begotten Son" are used. It is not, in consequence, certain that Jesus actually spoke thus.[3] But if he did, he so differed in character from his contemporaries that there is no need for great surprise. He alone knew his divinity, when other men knew nothing of theirs. He lived in a generation which was under the supreme rule of tradition, and he appealed to a higher witness—that of his own spirit. He proclaimed his soul—and our souls—to be born of God, and therefore denied that he was under any obligation to submit to the rules of the Scribes and Pharisees. By calling himself the Son of God he taught that the highest authority is the individual spirit, which must, if necessary, pass judgment on the traditions with which it

[1] Matt. xxiii. 9.

[2] *Ibid*, xii. 50.

[3] Professor James Drummond, speaking of the speeches of Jesus set forth in this Gospel, gives the opinion "that they are genuine reminiscences, called up after the lapse of many eventful and exciting years, and consequently liable not only to be conveyed in the author's peculiar manner, but to have their substance affected by the intermingling of his own feelings and experiences."—*The Character and Authorship of the Fourth Gospel*, p. 35.

comes in contact. He is the greatest supporter that has lived for the use of private judgment as opposed to authority in religious matters. When the prophet of the Old Testament felt his spirit rebelling against the orthodoxy of his time, he spoke with the preface, "Thus saith the Lord." Jesus, in like circumstances, called himself "Son of God."

He preached the divinity of the soul, the high birthright and true estate of humanity. We are all of divine origin; unfortunately, in many cases the divinity within becomes obscured, and life (hardly deserving the name) becomes little more than a mechanical submission to rules and traditions.

Jesus taught from his own spiritual experience, and the divinity in ourselves perceives the truth of his teaching and admits its divine origin. And the supremacy of Western civilisation bears witness to its truth, and hence to the divinity of its source. But there is no reason to take a superstitious view of that divinity by interpreting "divine" in any supernatural irrational sense. Though Jesus was a marvellous man, there is not good reason for believing that he was more than a man. He is recognised by all as a very great character and teacher of the truth, and I see no necessity for further doctrine concerning him. And this contention is supported by his own teaching as expressed in the Gospels. When the ruler addressed him as "Good Master," Jesus said to

him, "Why callest thou me good? None is good, save one, that is, God." He never calls himself "God"; only "Son of God." That he would ask of modern men the acceptance of the Athanasian Creed or the Nicene Creed is incompatible with his character as the Gospels delineate it. Is it not easy to imagine him calling them "vain repetitions" or "traditions by which the Word of God is made of none effect"? For most men, at any rate, the Athanasian Creed is largely meaningless. Meaningless propositions cannot help true religion; and they are alien to the spirit of Christianity.

What kind of attitude do we ourselves wish other men to take towards us? The men we like are not those who are subservient to us, who in a sense worship us, but those who like what we like, with whom we are in sympathy, whose aims, ideals, enthusiasms agree with our own. And so it was with Jesus. Not those who call him "Lord, Lord," but those who love their fellows, and do the will of God—these are the true Christians. Not he who diligently professes that "Jesus is God," or who endeavours to warm up an adoration for him, but the man who is Christ-like, who looks with singleness of eye, loves his fellow-creatures, and pursues the ideals of truth and right as Jesus did. In such a sense—which is, of course, not the conventional one—Huxley or Herbert Spencer may have been as good a Christian as any Bishop.

The life of Jesus has resulted in the profound

benefit of the human race. Numbers of the fallen and depressed have since received inspiration from his treatment of the publicans and sinners, and from his sufferings. Christianity has appealed to the emotions as well as the intellect. A man's will can only be improved by the overpowering of his lower affections by higher ones: Jesus, by capturing the love of many men, has thereby effected a salvation for them. The world's history shows how teachers of new spiritual truth have suffered on account of their messages—suffered for us who profit by their words. So Jesus suffered for us. He triumphed in spirit over the worst of material conditions; and that was to effect a reconciliation for the most afflicted. He preached a gospel of peace and goodwill which has brought hope and life to many. And so the doctrine of the "Atonement" has arisen. But the interpretation of this doctrine, that Jesus by his death paid a penalty to an outraged God for us, as a man might in our courts pay a fine imposed on his friend, is for us misleading. It is an ancient imagery, depending on the anthropomorphic conception of God, and for us—because it does not sufficiently express the truth—is untrue.

His work was effectual, and through the civilised world to-day the spirit of Jesus may be found. To love that spirit is the essence of Christianity. Towards the individual Jesus of Nazareth we cannot expect now to feel as did those who saw and

talked with him in the flesh. Matthew Arnold wrote[1]: "And perhaps too, we do wrong, and inevitably fall into what is artificial and unnatural, in labouring so much to produce in ourselves now, as the one impulse determining us to use the method and secret and temper of Jesus, that conscious, ardent sensation of personal love to him which we find the first generation of Christians feeling and professing, and which was the natural motor for those who were with him or near him, and, so to speak, touched him; and in making this our first object." Jesus himself said: "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing." Definite material facts were nothing to him: when told that his mother and brethren were near, he answered in the words quoted previously: "Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." Material Christianity, founded on a belief in the historic accuracy of the Gospels, has largely completed its work; henceforth, increasingly, Christianity must be a matter of spirit, less and less concerned with any particular names, dogmas, or past events. To put stress on these is to fail to grasp the essential nature of the teaching of Jesus. Perhaps the use of the name "Christian" will decline; the reality which the name stands for will always remain. That for which Jesus died—the

[1] *Literature and Dogma*, chap. xii., § 3.

will of God and the good of men—will always be pursued.

Jesus did not teach that revelation stopped with himself. He spoke of the "kingdom of heaven" as continually growing; he compared it to the seed which disappears and becomes "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." The blade of Christianity must die, that it may be transformed into the ear. Jesus knew that his disciples tended to place undue trust in material facts, *in his own Person particularly;* and that they would never realise the spiritual nature of truth until he had gone from them. So he said[1]: "*It is expedient that I go away: for if I go not away, the Spirit of Truth will not come unto you.*" The circumstances are similar to-day. There are still many who trust too much in old manuscripts, miracles, the Bible, or the individual Jesus of Nazareth. It is expedient that the dogmas concerning the historic Christ pass away, that the essential truth may appear. Criticism is doing the work of cutting away the ground on which these dogmas rest, and is preparing the way for a better understanding of Jesus and his teaching.

Jesus said, "Be ye therefore perfect": that is also the command of evolution. He said, "By their fruits ye shall know them"—which is empiricism. He taught men to trust to their own experience and

[1] John xvi. 7 and 13.

reason, rather than to tradition and authority; and so, in the controversies of to-day between Freethought and "Christianity," surely it must be concluded that Jesus is on the side of Freethought. He is the leader of those who do not conform, and are not content with current ideas. His teaching is essentially a distrust of the outward appearance, of names, forms, and dogmas, and an insistence on the spiritual significance only. It is not supernatural, but shows the spiritual in the natural, the divine in the human.

In the Middle Ages learned men called themselves followers of Aristotle; but they so hopelessly misunderstood him that he would have been the first to oppose their teaching. It is from those same "Dark Ages" that the doctrines of "Christianity" have come to us, and they just as hopelessly fail to represent the truth concerning Jesus.

V.

THE TRADITIONS AND THEIR ORIGIN

THE difficulty which envelops the question of the divinity of Jesus is due, perhaps, in large measure to the anthropomorphic conception of God—the view of God as a Being distinct from this world, an individual Person who thinks, feels, and wills as men do, only without their imperfections; a Being to whom one may speak as to another man, and who judges or grants petitions as another man might do. He is an all-powerful and all-benevolent despot. This Person, it is said, existed before the universe, and created it; later, he put into the minds of certain leaders and prophets messages to the Jewish race. At last, about 1900 years ago, he sent a Second Person, a supernatural Son who was somehow a part of himself (the doctrine cannot be understood), to be born into this world among the Jews as Jesus of Nazareth, with a final message to men and a propitiatory death to die. Since then a Third Person, somehow emanating in an incomprehensible manner from the First and Second Persons, and yet still forming with them one Person, has been sent to dwell invisibly with men to teach them and console them. Matthew Arnold

describes this God as a "magnified and non-natural man."

And why should this creed not be accepted? Because it is unverifiable; it is not the simplest explanation of our experience, and indeed has, in Christian times, become so confused as not to be an explanation at all; it is only the creation of human brains, the invention of men who had far less opportunities for natural knowledge than exist to-day, and who had a correspondingly greater belief in the fantastic and supernatural. Before considering the objections to the traditional description, I will try to describe, as far as possible, what I think to be the truer conception.

Such conception must be indefinite in nature, for "God" includes for us the idea of infinity. God is the essence of the universe, its life and spirit and its law. God is not *a* Being, but the inspiration of all being. God may be known as life and force are known; but it is as impossible to describe God as it is to describe what force is or what life is, why particles of matter gravitate towards one another, or why cells react when irritated. God is the Spirit of a universe in which there are distinctions of good and bad, and in which the future depends upon the past; hence God our Judge. God is the Spirit of the universe which has produced us; hence God our Father. But "Judge" and "Father" are poetic symbols for God, not scientific descriptions of him. God is the inner truth, beauty, and

reality of things which men experience, but do not fully understand, and which they seek to discover. And God is the inspiration of our own lives, best and worst, the power by which all move, live, and have their being; though some have a greater inspiration, a higher and stronger life than others.

It may be said that the existence of a personal God is verified by the answers that are given to prayers. But, in the first place, it has not been fully established, allowing for the possibilities of coincidence, that there have been such answers. And if it be granted that there are answers to prayers, it is not thereby proved that the answers express the will of a Person—a gracious Lord. That minds act on other minds without the ordinary medium of signs (*i.e.*, telepathically) there is very fair evidence to show. That mind acts on matter in our own bodies is certain; and that minds may be able to act directly on more distant matter is not inconceivable. It is, then, a possible explanation that, when the attention is concentrated in earnest prayer, the force exerted might produce results, as a natural consequence, relating to the thoughts of the person praying. That intense thinking should produce radiations in all directions and effect results at a distance, without the intermediary assistance of the bodily senses, does not seem more impossible than telegraphy without an intervening wire must have seemed a few years ago. That answers to prayer should be natural consequences

seems a more probable explanation than the hypothesis of a supernatural gracious Lord.

The notion of a Supreme Individual is unsatisfactory for many reasons. It suggests arbitrariness and interference with the continuity of things. Events, according to this hypothesis, happen as they do because it is the will of this Person, who may at any time interfere and alter the connections. Rules of conduct must be obeyed only because he has chosen to command so. But if the future is to be taken into account in the ordering of our lives, it is essential that the future be unalterably related to the past. Men work for the future because they believe that the sequence of events is so ordered that their present acts will certainly produce the results they desire. It is useless to make investments when revolution is threatened. A good government must be free from suspicion of caprice. Only under a rule which is impersonal in character, firm, and settled, and whose actions are predictable, can free men do their best work. The supreme governor must be not any individual will, but the Spirit of Truth. It will perhaps be quoted that God is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." That indicates that God is not an individual, for change and movement are essential to an individual; it is by them we recognise life.

A consideration of the relations between the traditional personal God and men leads at once to a dilemma. It is said that men are entirely

dependent upon him, and can do no good thing without him ; on the other hand, that men are free and responsible to him for their actions, and will be punished by him if they do badly. But the two statements are irreconcilable. It is said that he has given to men the power of choosing between good and evil. But then also he made the superior and inferior selves which choose, and choose well or ill according as they are superior or inferior. "The potter," says Stephen, "has no right to be angry with his pots. If he wanted them different, he should have made them different. The consistent theologian must choose between the Creator and the judge."[1]

A "person" implies something finite, not self-sufficient, but which grows, and whose life consists in its relations to its surroundings. A person is a kind of centre which is acted upon and then reacts according to the nature of the action. A person must receive before he can give. The importance of the individual in the search for truth has been seen. But he is the manifestation of life, not its source. He is like the ground-glass screen of a camera which receives the rays of light from external objects, and renders visible an illuminated "real image." The screen does not make the image, but it is necessary to render it visible. If we say that God is a Person, it is implied that he is

[1] *Science of Ethics*, p. 279.

finite, dependent, changeable, and not the source of life. Such a God might exist to befriend some and punish others, but he must be subject to some higher power. And the idea of a God not absolute[1] is surely a most unsatisfying one. Is it suggested that God is an individual, but not one such as men know—an individual who is infinite and independent, and who does not change? That is a mere trifling with language, as though one should speak of a thief who never stole, or define a triangle as a quadrilateral having three sides. "If the term 'personal' is to bear anything like its ordinary sense," says Mr. Bradley, "assuredly the Absolute [here substitute "God"] is not merely personal. It is not personal, because it is personal and more. It is, in a word, super-personal."[2] With this term may be compared Emerson's term, "Over-soul."

That for practical purposes it may often have been sufficient to symbolise God as an individual—as a judge or a father—is no doubt true. But when, as is continually done, the symbol is confused with the reality, when it is said that God *is* a Person, and inferences are drawn from this premiss, then truth suffers and harm is done. And care is necessary to prevent such confusion, for there is a widespread tendency to make it. It is the confusion which constitutes idolatry. There is danger in the extended use of symbols which are not the highest

[1] As suggested by Dr. Rashdall.
[2] *Appearance and Reality*, p. 531.

one is capable of using. Men are now more acquainted with the impersonal methods of science, and personal symbols are no longer necessary as in the past.

As time goes on it becomes clearer that morality is part of the nature of things, not a series of arbitrary commands enforced by a supernatural judge. An action is right or wrong because experience shows it to be good or bad, not because a Great King has proclaimed its rightness or wrongness. Wrong-doing inevitably brings, sooner or later, its appropriate punishment. As we sow, we reap. This is a natural law relentlessly enforced. And the realisation of this law will guard morality more effectively than the hypothesis of a personal judge.

God as Friend may still be discovered (partially) in the sights and sounds of nature, in human friends, and in the thoughts and deeds of great men. The world often appears hostile, and human friends fail, so that the friendliness of God must be a matter of faith; but a faith founded directly on one's experiences is more reasonable, and may be as helpful as the supposition of an invisible Person in the sky.

If the idea of God as a Person have so much against it, whence does it arise, and how does it come to be a cardinal doctrine of "Christianity"? Its origin is a human one. The doctrine has been formulated by men ages ago, and the tradition has

been handed down to us. The fact has more than once been dwelt upon that every individual himself contributes to every truth which he learns. What a man perceives in his surroundings, what he learns from his experiences, depends upon what he already is. He can only apprehend any new idea in terms of those already in his mind. An eclipse of the sun to an astronomer means a rare opportunity for observations relating to the sun or moon; to the savage it conveys something different—it is a mysterious supernatural portent. The most that a man can do when he describes what he has seen and heard is to relate how the events in question appeared to *him*; and the more primitive his nature, the more will his description fall short of the truth.

Let these considerations be applied to the doctrines of "Christianity," beginning with the present time. The orthodox minister has, in his turn, been taught certain doctrines by his parents or other teachers. He has read certain books, and has reflected (more or less) on what he has heard and read, in the light of his own experience; and he has reached certain conclusions. Each man's religion is a synthesis from his own ideas. Every man has his own religion, as he has his own distinct countenance, not precisely the same as that of anybody else. A denomination is a class of religions which exhibit important similarities; a "religion" is a higher classification. Every

occupant of the pulpit who asserts or implies that he is teaching the religion of God is just uttering his own conclusions. He may have learnt verbally certain statements of doctrine; but he has himself had to find the meaning of those statements, and this meaning he puts into words again for the benefit of the congregation. If he is a man of education and insight, his teaching will exhibit the same characteristics; if he be narrow-minded, the religion which he calls God's religion will be no broader than himself. If he denounce men who think differently as "infidels," or "doubters of God," he merely exhibits his own ignorant inability to estimate the value of his own powers and experiences. There are some teachers, I think, who are more like machines, repeating traditional statements of which they do not know (in any adequate sense) the meaning.

Whence come the traditional statements of doctrine? Those which are in the Prayer Book of the Church of England are the conclusions of certain theologians of the Tudor period. To accept these bodily is, in Matthew Arnold's words, "seeing Christianity through the spectacles of a number of second or third-rate men who lived in Queen Elizabeth's time—men whose works one never dreams of reading for the purpose of enlightening and edifying oneself."

Then there is the Bible. The English Bible is a translation, and a translation must be dependent on

the man who translates. It was a selection from a number of writings by the men (more or less fallible) who arranged the Canon. And the original writers were themselves men. The Gospel writers—even if they had personal acquaintance with Jesus—can only show as much of him as they were capable of appreciating. And the Old Testament Scriptures were also the writings of men; they are just records of the religious ideas of a primitive Semitic race. Those ideas were more advanced than those of the races with which the Jews came into contact, but they were none the less dependent on the Jewish character, and fell short of the whole truth. It is characteristic of early times that men were personal in their ideas, as children are; they freely personified objects, and knew not the impersonal way of science. The ancient Hebrews were primitive fighting men, and they naturally conceived God as a fighting king. They believed in the righteousness of revenge, and so they conceived of their God as revengeful and punishing, a king who slew his enemies and demanded sacrifices. From time to time there arose among them seers or prophets possessed by new ideas, of the truth and importance of which they were convinced. They felt these ideas to be divine, as, indeed, we may say they were. But these prophets, in common with their fellows, had always thought of God as a great King Jehovah, and so they supposed their ideas to

be messages from this King, and delivered them in the form, "Thus saith the Lord....." Yet these messages were only the result of the natural processes of their own human minds. As the race progressed, so did its God. There is an evolution of the idea of God within the Bible; for the God of Jesus is not the God who "hardened Pharaoh's heart."

The tradition of a Personal God has been handed down from the Jews to the "Christians" of to-day, though confused by such utterances as the Athanasian Creed. If some who call themselves orthodox have a deeper and more spiritual conception, they hide their views, for they always speak of God as acting as men act (only perfectly), and they always use for God the pronoun "He." The use of the word "He" to represent "God" is misleading, and "it" is also unsuitable. "God" should strictly have a special pronoun, or none should be used except with qualification.

Other races than that of the Jews have had other doctrines about God, and about Incarnation and Atonement. And, though we believe the Jews to have arrived nearer to the truth, that is no reason why their view should be accepted as the whole truth. The doctrine that the Jewish writers were specially inspired has been referred to in connection with the authority of the Bible. They were inspired in the sense that all life is inspired; but they were not inspired to know the whole truth.

(The doctrine of inspiration is itself a human product.) It is not for us to be satisfied with what men who lived long ago tell us about God, however useful their ideas may be to us. We ourselves have to seek God, a God slowly and progressively manifested in an evolving world through human minds. The ancient Hebrew writing says "God created man in his own image"; it is truer to say that man has conceived God in his own image. And the old conception is now an inadequate one, which men, once convinced of its insufficiency, should not hesitate to discard.

And if we are unable to look upon God as a Person, a mystical King, we cannot hold that Jesus was more than a man through bearing a unique relationship to that Person.

What conception Jesus had of the nature of God we cannot know. It was natural, anyway, for him to make use of the current Jewish notion in order to make himself understood by the Jews. It was not the verbal form of a doctrine on which he laid emphasis, but its spiritual and practical significance.

The central element of the traditional "Christianity" on its theoretical side is supernaturalism, God being regarded as a supernatural Being, Jesus as supernaturally revealing Him, and the Bible as being supernaturally inspired by Him.

"Supernatural" implies something not bound by natural laws, something which comes to men

from outside the natural world, and is not to be explained in terms of natural experience. It implies a radical dualism of things: two worlds, natural and supernatural, between which there is no intelligible connecting link. There are plenty of things in this world which cannot yet be explained: why crystals form, why seeds sprout, the mystery of birth. But such phenomena are not called supernatural. "Supernatural" implies not only beyond present knowledge, but beyond the range of thought. Yet it is only by thinking that men can form their creeds. There may, and doubtless does, exist much that is to us in our present state unthinkable; but such things can, for that reason, mean nothing to us here and now. It is not easy to define supernaturalism, but it may be judged by what it means in practice, and that is, in the first place, unquestioning belief. Supernatural "Christianity" is founded on certain fundamental dogmas. These dogmas seem to many to be improbable or to lead to contradictions; the "Christian" teacher replies that they are supernatural mysteries. That means that they must be accepted on authority: if the learner cannot understand them, he must accept them nevertheless, whatever objections arise from his own experience. His thought must not have free play when these fundamental dogmas are in view. He must not judge of them as he would ordinary propositions. But there is no other way, so that in that case he cannot judge at all. And

yet, under present circumstances, he must judge. So that, by such teaching, he is only landed in a dilemma.

Supernaturalism is superstition. A man who puts faith in a charm, or distrust in the number thirteen, is called superstitious, because he supposes them to possess a power of an occult nature, not the result of their acting according to natural experience. The believer in supernaturalism is in a similar position. For him the words of the Bible are not ordinary words, but have some unnatural power in them; and the sacraments have a like power. The works of Jesus are not merely an exposition of the world we live in, but are the result of a magic power coming to it from outside; and God is manifested not by law, but as a Being above law. Supernaturalism does not admit the necessity of progressing by the way of understanding. It does not recognise the fact that men have to work their way and find their salvation not only by their actions, but by their thought.

And a supernatural religion is primarily a religion of fear. Belief rests not on understanding and appreciation, but on the idea of a superior power. The necessity of obedience is one of the first lessons a man has to learn; and it is perhaps only by fear, by belief in a power higher than his present self, that he can begin to learn it. But obedience, in the form of submission to a higher power, is at best a poor virtue—that of a slave.

There is more to be learnt than that. The higher obedience is that of the man who understands its necessity, who obeys not from fear, but willingly, an obedience not to external pressure, but to his own highest conception of what is right. And such obedience requires that the higher power be related to man's nature, so that it can be understood. It rests on the thinking power and approval of the mind. It has been said that it would be more noble to go to Hell than to believe in a God who hardens men's hearts and condemns them for ignorance they could not help. But a supernatural religion would require you to obey, whether or no you approve, because its God is a God of power, who will punish you if you do not. It is true that the religion of many "Christians" is not of this kind. That is because it contains a large human natural rational element. In spite of protests against Rationalism, "Christianity" in circles considered orthodox is becoming more and more rational. But there remains still an unreasonable supernatural element which causes difficulty to thinking people to-day.

One could not love a wholly supernatural God. Real love cannot be artificial; it is the result of a natural relation between the lover and the loved. A man loves a friend because he perceives in him something in accord with himself, and cannot help doing so. His own nature recognises some beauty, and he spontaneously loves that which manifests it.

There is something common to the two which draws them together. Both thought and love are aspects of life, and they can only progress by gradual growth. They can only pass slowly and continuously from the known to the unknown. Supernaturalism creates a gulf which they cannot cross.

The opposition which Jesus showed to supernaturalism has already been noticed. His religion was essentially a religion of love, and his teaching was natural. His doctrines were based not on authority, but on experience. His tone was not that of a lord among slaves, but that of a free man among free men. "I have called you friends," he said to his disciples. The incomprehensible doctrines which are the nominal beliefs of so many modern "Christians" do not come from Jesus, but are the creation of mediæval minds in an age remarkable for its superstition.

But if Jesus be thus considered as opposed to supernaturalism, what view must be taken of the miracles recorded of him? It is impossible to say how far fiction has crept into the Gospel narratives; but, supposing that some of the miraculous stories are historical fact, it does not follow that these events were supernatural, according to what I believe to be the significance of that word. They were extraordinary occurrences, but there is no need to suppose them unnatural. In the rare and the exceptional, invaluable truths are often

discovered. To the general rule, for instance, that substances expand when heated there is an exception in the case of water near the freezing point; and this exception, by its effects on climate, has great effects for the human race. Again, very few people have seen a piece of radium, and nobody has seen more than a small quantity of it; and yet it has brought a new revelation to the scientific world. And it seems by no means unlikely that in the rare psychic phenomena, which have in the past been considered supernatural, and which are now being more carefully observed, truths of the greatest import for human beings await discovery. Of the miracles recorded of Jesus the majority were cases of the healing of diseased persons, and abundant present evidence can be found to show the curative effects of strong faith. That the mind has great influence on the body, and that one person can effect great good for another by inspiring him with hope, is as certain as anything in medicine. It is quite clear that Jesus was a man of exceptionally great spiritual insight and power, and it is reasonable to suppose that such a character might be able rapidly to effect on others results so wonderful as to seem supernatural to the ordinary observer. He was far ahead of his age, and he may well have discovered that of which we are still ignorant. As to the other miracles, it may be that the fictional element is there greater, or it may be that he had learnt something unknown to us of the

relation between mind and matter. And we seem to be drawn to the conclusion that, if the records be true, he was doing that of which the secret may again be discovered, or indeed, infinite time being given, one might say must be discovered. It is not the belief in wonderful and exceptional powers and events that is unreasonable, but the opposition to free thought, the non-recognition of the fact that truth can only be discovered by inference from personal experience, and the irrational submission to authority. And it is these things which supernaturalism, reduced to its lowest terms, implies.

Beyond the boundaries of their experience men construct imaginatively. And in this unexplored region a man is entitled to hold any opinions he please if they be not contrary to his experience, and if he recognise such opinions as provisional constructions only, and do not confuse such belief with knowledge. It is by making all kinds of suppositions beyond what he knows that he sometimes makes one which fits experience, and thus the boundaries of knowledge are widened. But men have in the past made such suppositions about ultimate religious questions, and then they or their descendants have forgotten their human origin, and have dogmatically called them religious truths. Certain ancient Jews speculated on the origin of the world, and the result is seen in the story of the Garden of Eden. Certain mediæval "Christians" speculated on the nature of God, and

the result is the Athanasian Creed. And modern "Christians" apparently fail to understand that these constructions only represent the ideas of the past. They implicitly accept them as facts instead of themselves endeavouring to reach the truth more nearly.

Until recent times men had an intense belief in the supernatural, in wonderful legends. They believed that by extra-natural aid actions impossible for a man not so aided might be performed. Acts and words which we—if we had been in their place—should have judged rationally, they, from the nature of their previous ideas, looked upon as supernatural. Among the Jews the belief in the supernatural seems to have been especially strong. Jesus said to them, "Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe." And by Paul they are contrasted with the Greeks; he says, "The Jews desire a sign: the Greeks seek after wisdom." It is to be expected that beliefs which arose among them would be supernatural in character, the demand creating the supply. The dogmas of to-day have been handed down from superstitious times, and they exhibit such a nature. There are none which have not come to us through the minds of men, and they have necessarily been coloured by those minds. But they bear no hall-mark of truth, and present-day investigation is resulting in their claims becoming discredited.

It would be natural for priests who wished to

inculcate submission to emphasise the idea of supernatural powers and punishments, and this is what "Christian" priests have done.

And supernaturalism is supported by the deep desire among human beings for extraordinary assistance. In this world things are laborious, and men have to work their way slowly and with difficulty; and they desire a short cut to their ends. So some gamble; others trust in charms and the supernatural. A belief may be consoling even though unverifiable. Many wish to place their trust in something which is both definite and yet more than finite; they want a supreme Authority on which to rest. And so arise confused doctrines of a Man-God. But to confuse finite and infinite, the material with the spiritual, is the error of idolatry. The desire to rest on authority, though natural, is a weakness; and our imperfections and limitations do not excuse a deliberate distortion of truth. The craving for external support, rather than to seek and strive for oneself, indicates weak faith and a parasitic tendency.

It is said that to deny the superhuman nature of Jesus is to take away that which has been, and is, the great consolation and moral support of the human race. But that is a misrepresentation of the facts. It is really effective now for but a small number even in "Christian" England. For the few who value the orthodox supernatural doctrines there is a multitude for whom they have no

269224

significance, and many to whom they are a stumbling-block. And the only right procedure is impartial investigation, disregarding the interests of any particular class.

It is by a progressive discarding of stays and props that living beings grow stronger. The soul, like the body, develops by exercise, not by confinement. A support is also necessarily in some degree a fetter; and each one put away means an increase of freedom. The immediate disciples of Jesus expected that he would become a visible king. "We trusted," said two of them, "that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel";[1] and no doubt the belief had been a support to them. But the time came when they were compelled to alter their view; and we, of this age, have to adopt the same course.

It is impossible to discover the whole truth about things. What can be done, and should be done, is to find the simplest explanation which will fit experience. That is what the scientific man does, and is continually re-doing. At one time heat was conceived as a fluid, and chemistry was ruled by the atomic theory. But these theories have been given up because they explain only part of the phenomena, and more satisfactory ones have been constructed. And the old religious theories have to be given up in like manner in favour of the

[1] Luke xxiv. 21.

simpler view of the world as a natural, orderly, rational evolution. In the Bible we read of a chosen people and an age of miracles. Why should there be such a chosen race? And why should the Jews have been chosen? Were they so eminently superior to the Greeks? Why should there not be a possibility of miracles now? Why should the twelve apostles have seats near the throne? Were they the twelve best men who ever lived? And if so, is it not curious that the twelve best men should have lived at the same time? "If," a child has said, "God can do everything, and the devil is so wicked, why doesn't He kill the devil?" The traditonal religion constantly suggests a "How?" or a "Why?" and leaves an impression of favouritism. And the explanation which it offers for all difficulties is that they are supernatural mysteries. But by sufficiently drawing on the supernatural one could make any explanation fit any facts. It cannot be certainly proved that a thunderstorm is not caused by the anger of a God Jupiter. It is only that there is a so much simpler explanation provided by our knowledge of electricity that the former is rendered ridiculous. The test between any two theories may be reduced to "Which is the most natural?" The greatest rationalist must in the end realise (and he more than any other will do so) how much there is beyond his own power of apprehending, and that he is ultimately dependent on a power higher than

himself. But he recognises the duty of using his powers to their utmost extent, of believing with *all* his mind.

Neither the old beliefs nor the new can be demonstrated true or untrue. All that can be done is to compare them, and adopt that which appears to be most satisfactory. Is it easier to believe that the supernatural doctrines of the Church represent truth, or that they are merely the imaginations of men of an earlier day? Is it easier to believe that the Bible is a literal communication from a Great King, or that it is just a collection of ancient human writings? Is it easier to believe that Jesus was an incomprehensible Man-God, or that he was a very great man? To me there is no doubt that the truth is with the latter alternatives.

VI.

THE GREAT COMMANDMENT

THE moral teaching of Jesus is summed up in the two great commandments :—

> Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.
>
> Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

How can we love a God we have never seen with the enthusiasm here described? The difficulty arises from the common conception of God as a Person—a Great King—who lives above the sky. Jesus said, "God is a Spirit." The word "Spirit" suggests the conventional representation of human form, but intangible and transparent or invisible, which arises, no doubt, from the difficulty of conceiving a soul other than in the shape of the body it has left. But this representation is conventional only. The meaning of "spirit" is essence, life, inner-principle. God is the life of the universe. The nature of God cannot be described. God is manifested in greater or less degree in all phenomena; and all that can be done is to investigate phenomena, and try to find out as much about that nature as possible. God may be said to be known in experience, for to live means to know God; but

to know God in the sense of being able to describe God is impossible. "Father" is a poetical symbol only for God.

In relation to conduct, God is represented by "Perfection," the absolute truth, beauty, power, reality. We live in a world of phenomena which are more or less contradictory, ugly, injurious; and the work of life is to find the underlying truth, to bring good out of evil, to advance towards perfection. Thou shalt love to seek perfection, the highest that thy mind can conceive and thy strength attain to: that is the great commandment. Thou shalt never be content with less than the best. "Be ye.....perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." To the artist, statesman, man of science, to every man in his sphere, the order is to press on to his ideal, the best that he knows. Be zealous, whole-hearted, single-minded; get the most out of life, waste nothing. Life is essentially a progress; those who are content with "things as they are" fail to grasp its meaning. It is by movement that the presence of life is recognised. And it must be noted that in this life the ideal always is ideal. A part of what was once a man's ideal may be attained, but the ideal recedes, and the pressing on must continue till the end of life.

In Paul's words: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after.....Brethren, I count not myself to have

apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark." Or, like Wordsworth's Happy Warrior, who—

> Plays in the many games of life, that one
> Where what he most doth value must be won:
> . . . . . .
> Who, not content that former worth stand fast,
> Looks forward, persevering to the last
> From well to better, daily self-surpast:

The words, "with *all* thy heart, and with *all* thy soul, and *with all thy mind*," bear especially on the contests of the present. This is what the rational thinker of to-day is trying to do—to find the belief which will satisfy his mind as completely as possible. That is all that Rationalism means. It will not pretend to harmonise contradictory elements of experience by the assertion of supernaturalism which to the intellect is nothing; but it seeks the explanation of things which is most satisfactory to the reasoning power. The minister who, unlike St. Paul, considers himself to have apprehended, and warns his hearers to pay no attention if doubts of their creed arise in their minds, or who tries to persuade them to accept doctrine on authority—*i.e.*, at second-hand, not from their own inner conviction—is preaching disobedience to the first and great commandment. The creed of absolute truth is beyond mortal reach; it is the work of our intellects to advance towards it

as far as they are capable. The important matter, so far as a man's own spiritual life is concerned, is not what his creed is, but that, whatever it is, he believes it with all his heart and mind. Not creed, but faith, is the essential. An honest Agnostic obeys the great commandment.

People who hold opinions less true than our own may yet, in that they hold them more heartily, be nearer the "kingdom of heaven" than ourselves. There are Hindus and Buddhists much nearer the kingdom of heaven than many professing Christians. It was of a Gentile that Jesus said, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." And he said, "The men of Nineveh shall rise up in judgment with this generation." Whether in creed or in conduct, the essential is not where a man stands on the ladder of merit, but whether he is ascending it as fast as he can. The publicans and harlots were commended above the Pharisees. In this world what counts is attainment, victory; in the kingdom of heaven it is the attaining, the how and why one is striving, that is of import. Not to win, but to fight well, is what matters. "My kingdom," said Jesus, "is not of this world." "Many that are first shall be last, and the last first." Spiritually it is not a question of doing well, but of doing one's best, of acting according to one's conscience.

To act conscientiously means simply—as the name indicates—to act according to one's knowledge.

Conscience is no absolute standard of right and wrong; it is the decision of a man's own mind. But it is the supreme guide for him. What it tells him depends upon his own nature and experiences; but, whatever it tells him, he ought, if he value his soul, to obey it. If his nature or circumstances be abnormal, his conscience may tell him to become, say, an anarchist. If so, he ought to become an anarchist, and if he in consequence come to the gallows he is a martyr. Spiritually he has committed no offence; he has fulfilled the law of his abnormal nature. It may be necessary for society to condemn his body; no one has a right to judge his soul. On the other hand, if a man, through fear of censure or love of praise, does as others would have him rather than as he himself believes to be best, he does wrong to his spirit, though all call him good. It is better to lose the world than one's own soul. Conscience may be called the voice of God in that it is the witness of a man's own life which is divine; it is not a supernatural message from a Great King.

The Commandment bids us not to be content with names and appearances, but, if one is not satisfied with what is called good or true or religious, to seek the real thing. Life is not given merely to be maintained, but to be used for acquirement. One need not strive for striving's sake after artificial ends, but do with one's might the things which the hand finds to do. There is plenty of

work to be done. The duty of man may be summed up by the words, "Go on." We must go on; and if the Churches cannot help us we must go on without them. It is not enough to have done good service, to have found something that is good. Goodness is only a relative term; what is good for the moment quickly becomes bad. The radical error of the commonly accepted "Christian" doctrines is their basis of past authority and their supernaturalism, which are opposed to progress, to thought, and to the great commandment of Jesus. Few deny that the "Christian" Churches have done good work in the past, and do a little in the present; but they—the episcopal Churches in particular—are not progressing as they would if they understood him whom they profess to serve. Knowledge has grown, language has grown, and men's needs have grown; but their dogmas and observances remain the same, utterly inadequate to the demands of the time. It is useless to exhort us in sentimental tone to hold fast to "the faith [*i.e.*, the creed] of our fathers"; the ideas of our fathers can no more suffice us than their coaches. We shall not show ourselves worthy of our forefathers by any slavish copying of them, but by doing what we consider to be best in the spirit in which they acted. To copy literally the tactics of Nelson would certainly not help to lead a modern admiral to victory; but the modern sailor may still act in the same spirit. Nelson and all other heroes have

been men of an independent nature who refused to be slaves to the traditions of their age, and, if we would be worthy disciples, we must follow their example in this respect.

One constantly finds this great commandment expressed in different terms by inspired writers. "Man's essential mission," says Maeterlinck, "is to live with all the ardour whereof he is capable." "To be what we are, and to become what we are capable of becoming, is the only end of life," wrote R. L. Stevenson. Not what is of value, but what is of most value, should command our attention and effort.

There is a phrase which is often used as a cloak for undue caution, insufficient effort, want of faith—"keeping on the safe side." Granting the necessity on occasion of "keeping on the safe side," it is well to remember that there is only one quite safe place—*i.e.*, the top—which cannot in this life be reached. Every side is more or less dangerous. The safest place possible for us is as near the top as we can get. "Keeping on the safe side" commonly means taking that course which gives less trouble or anxiety for the moment, putting off the evil day. But lingering thereon leads to anything but safety. How many fond parents, anxious to keep on the safe side, overclothe and coddle their children, with disastrous results in later years! How many men have lost fortunes or come to ruin through lack of enterprise! Military leaders know

that it is sometimes the truest caution to be daring. To put off the consideration of doubts, or to refuse to admit and confess truth, because it seems dangerous or unpleasant to do so, is to invite catastrophe later. To remain quiescent through fear of acting according to the best of one's belief is to disobey the great commandment; and it leads to the fate of the man who had one talent. If you do not use your powers, you lose them.

Making the most of life suggests, primarily, activity; but there are other necessary functions of life. It means absence of over-work as well as of insufficient activity. It means the best use of time, not only for work, but in their proper places for rest, recreation, even frivolity. Notwithstanding the frowns of many exclusive "religious" persons, there is a place in life for its lighter aspects as well as the more serious ones, and, unless these are enjoyed in due degree, life is not fully used or understood.

The great commandment is concretely illustrated by the references of Jesus to children :—

> Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever, therefore, shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.[1]
>
> Of such is the kingdom of heaven.[2]

The typical characteristics of children are, on the one hand, their ignorance, weakness, submissiveness; on the other, their spontaneity, their single-

[1] Matt. xviii. 3. [2] Mark x. 14.

mindedness, their whole-hearted enthusiasm, and their optimism — a strong trust in the fundamental goodness of things. They have faults enough, but they are strongly possessed by the desire to do and the desire to know—which may be consistent with an aversion to "lessons." The advocates of the traditional beliefs have sometimes made references to children in order to indicate the duty of humility and self-distrust, of submitting to authority, of not doubting the old views, but of accepting implicitly what they teach. But in so doing they appear to note only the superficial aspects of the child—those which result from its position and circumstances, not from its inner nature. A child accepts undoubtingly what it is told only because it cannot help doing so; its experience is not sufficiently wide, and it has not material for doubt. It submits to authority because it is impossible for it not to do so; it is entirely dependent on it. But give a child a chance to doubt, and it will quickly enough take it. Or give it cause to rebel, and it will want to do so. It is the nature of children to question, to want to know the "how" and the "why" of things; and they do not pretend to understand what their minds do not grasp. Like the Agnostic, and unlike the Pharisees, ancient and modern, they recognise their own limitations, and do not pretend to a knowledge which they have not. Thus, they possess the first necessary requisite to learning. A child does not

"try to believe"; it believes or disbelieves as it sees. Its thoughts and deeds are spontaneous. In later years it learns to be artificial, to repress its natural promptings, and live in conventional fashion; but artificiality is essentially foreign to the youthful spirit. True it likes stories, and acting, and make-believe; but it insists strongly on the distinction between what is pretended and what is real. Children distrust their knowledge, but trust their powers of seeing to obtain knowledge. They are humble towards that which commands their respect, but not of set purpose humble—*i.e.*, servile. They are not (until education has made them so) respecters of names, titles, traditions, but of that which commends itself to their feelings. They do not worry as to the safety of their souls, but simply go on, learning and doing, trying to get the utmost out of life, confident that the world is good and the future secure.

As we grow older and more experienced we learn the necessity of restraining our feelings, and that some of the ends we strove for are not so good as they once seemed. In youth the ideal cannot be very high. That is no matter: the important point is that it be one's own, not taken on authority from some teacher, and that it be hotly pursued. Then it will advance in front, ever higher. As we grow, our enthusiasm becomes less visible or invisible; we learn to think of means as well as ends, to act in less impulsive fashion, to be more diplomatic in our

efforts. We learn that much evil, before unsuspected, exists in the world; and this must be taken into account. The childish ignorance is no longer possible to us, and to attempt to act as though we were still childishly innocent is the height of absurdity. But the youthful spirit need not die. However impassive our countenances, we can still keep the active mind, always seeking the best. However thoroughly our feelings be under control, we can still possess feelings—still love. To lose love means to lose life, to become a numb lump of matter. It was by the enthusiasm which he awakened that Jesus gave "life more abundantly." Inside the hard skin may be the soft heart. Armour is useless without a soul inside it. Experience disillusions us, but we can still look further and higher, trusting that there is an ultimate good beyond every evil. In our thought and feeling we may still be spontaneous. We can refuse to be content with artificialities, and insist on living in the way that we feel to be most real. So shall we keep the great commandment.

This commandment has been regarded as an order indicating the duty of man; but the notion of duty is transcended. The command is not "Thou shalt do what is right with all thy might—whatever you may feel," but "Thou shalt *love* with all thy heart....." And no man can love to order. To *try* to love is as futile as trying to believe. Love which is not spontaneous does not

exist. The saying is to be regarded rather as a profound piece of instruction and encouragement; not an order, but a Gospel. "I tell you," says Jesus in effect, "that you should never give up seeking for the best, but believe, in spite of appearances, that all things work together for good, and trust in God with all your heart. Do not hesitate to live as keenly as possible." It has little effect on a man merely to tell him to believe or love; but his feelings may be aroused by bringing within his view, so that his soul, however undeveloped, may grasp it, that which he can see to be beautiful and good and true.

"We needs must love the highest when we see it."

And so the life of Jesus was devoted to rendering his teaching effective by making it clear that God is good, by inspiring men with faith and hope, and capturing their love. He did not merely moralise, but he helped men to be moral. "Woman," he said to her that was taken in adultery, "neither do I condemn thee: go and sin no more." The words were no doubt ten times more effective for good than any rebuke would have been. The teaching of Jesus went beyond the notion of duty to the fundamental love which is its basis. The clergy of to-day moralise freely and scatter rebukes enough, but if they would follow in the steps of Jesus they have a higher work to perform—to inspire the faith and love and give the instruction which shall help men to be moral. And this, so long as they hold

to their out-of-date ideas, it becomes increasingly difficult for them to do. It is necessary to emphasise the last four words of the above quotation—"when we see it." It is no good holding up before people beauties or ideals which are far beyond their range. Some have thought to educate their fellows by showing them pictorial masterpieces or the best music, and have been disappointed at the want of result. But the untrained eye or ear cannot find the beauties evident to those more developed. The principle quoted is not discredited by such failures. Love, like knowledge, can grow only step by step. No man can by taking thought add a cubit either to his own stature or to that of anyone else.

In the pursuit of his ideal a man is apt to forget that other men have their own ideals, which must necessarily be more or less different, and that they have as much right to carry out their own pursuit in their own way as he has. Hence the necessity for a special reminder in the second commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." To consider this law as a summing-up of social morality, forbidding us to do unlawful material injury to others, we are accustomed. But there is a further truth in it. A man's most real expression is in his ideals, his religion. Thou shalt respect another man's religion as thou wouldst have him respect thine. It is the law of toleration which has

been so much broken by "Christians." To persecute, even in the most refined manner, a man for his religion is to break this commandment. To try and persuade a man to change his religion from a motive of fear, or by submission to authority, and not because he really and freely grasps that the new religion is superior to his own, is to make an attack on him which disobeys the law. If a man believes his religion to be the true (or, rather, truest) one, he must in some way and in some degree endeavour to spread it. There is only one legitimate way—by bringing home rationally and conclusively to the feelings and understanding of his hoped-for convert the superiority of his own view to that of the other. He has no right to assume the attitude of a judge; not even that of an advocate; only that of a witness. No one has a monopoly of truth; the most true religion must prevail in the end.

To obey this law truly requires, I think, a realisation of the interdependence of men. Society is of an organic nature. "No man liveth to himself." "We are members one of another." In the struggle for existence men who co-operate well with their fellows take a leading position. The possibility of the varied pursuits of civilisation arises from men being able to depend on others to supply them with common necessaries. A strike or a boycott sometimes demonstrates very clearly the dependence of men on other men. And, apart

from material benefits, men are not spiritually independent. Since human beings were, there has been some degree of sympathy between every man and some of his fellow-creatures. If a man be morose and despondent, he infects those with whom he comes in contact. A man who sees his friend suffer himself suffers. And so with joy. Cheerfulness is infectious, as also is courage. We have a common nature, our friends being those in whom we most readily recognise this community. It is believed that a Dreyfus has been condemned unjustly, and whole foreign nations feel wronged. Some one performs a noble deed, and all his race is pleasurably interested. Thus, good or bad for any man means good or bad in some degree for his fellows. There is no absolute distinction between egoism and altruism. Like other distinctions, it is of a practical rough-and-ready nature only. A man will often serve himself best by devoting his attention to the service of others; on the other hand, he will often serve others best by cultivating himself and minding his own concerns. If a man neglect himself, he loses his power of doing good to his neighbour; if he take no interest in his neighbour, he loses much good himself.

To help truly another is a privilege, a task of difficulty which may be entered upon too lightly. There are well-meaning people who, thinking that they can manage the affairs of others better than those others can themselves do, merely arouse

resentment by their interference. And there are sentimental people whose feelings are aroused by their neighbours' sufferings, and who rush precipitately to relieve them for the sake rather of their own feelings than of the lasting good of the sufferers —being unconscious of the distinction. And any who hope for gratitude for benefits conferred should remember that their purpose is to that extent a self-seeking one.

What, then, should be the principle of action? Though ideally the good of one may be the good of all, yet in this imperfect world the claims of different persons are constantly opposed. How are the opposing claims to be reconciled? By obedience to the first commandment—devotion to what seems truest and best. It is for every man to remember his dependence, that he is indebted to his fellows, and that he has no private rights, except his right to the possession of his own soul, his freedom to think and feel as he will.[1] His rights are only those which he possesses in virtue of his being a part of a great scheme of things which includes also all other men, and between the different parts of which there is inevitably friction. He has some position to fill and work to do, and he must strive to maintain his place and efficiency. So he must look after his own interests. But his part is not to grind down others merely that he may

[1] I speak from a practical standpoint. On the question of the freedom of his will I do not wish to enter here.

gain at their expense. It is, giving and taking, to seek to advance things towards the ideal state of all men working smoothly together in their own places, which is the true interest both of himself and the others. The finest characters are altruistic, but their altruism is not at the expense of self; it is the sign of a well-developed self; they have found out that a selfish life is not worth living. "You are told," says Maeterlinck, "you should love your neighbour as yourself; but if you love yourself meanly, childishly, timidly, even so shall you love your neighbour." And again: "It is the first duty of the soul to become as happy, complete, independent, and great as lies in its power. Herein is no egoism or pride." An illustration may be again taken from childhood. Here is the testimony of an East-End worker[1]:—

> What the East-end would be without the children it is impossible even to imagine. Their eagerness and inquisitiveness, their generosity, their pathetic dependence, their innocence and ignorance, their lavish affection —all these things are a perpetual source of refreshing to the dispirited worker, and he cannot picture himself existing without them.

The pleasure given by children to others is not the result of any conscious unselfishness, but simply the result of their simple pursuit of the best that they can find. Not by self-repression, but by self-expression, by the pursuit of perfection, will a man obtain the best both for himself and his neighbour.

[1] Richard Free, *Seven Years' Hard*.

It has been suggested that our society, based on individual competition, is unchristian. The competitive system in practice falls short of the ideal, as all practice must; it does not follow that it is not the best or necessary way of approaching the Christian ideal. The most satisfactory results for all concerned seem to be obtained by every man in the first place paying chief attention to his own interests. Each knows what he himself wants better than he knows the needs of his neighbour, and can work for himself before he is sufficiently conscious of his neighbour's desires for them to inspire in him any energy. And his neighbour wishes to be let alone; it is not to have his work done for him that he seeks, unless he be degenerate, but a fair field to work out his own purposes. Competition promotes efficiency. By competition men find the places for which they are best fitted, the work they are best able to do. That the strong should take precedence of the weak is for the benefit both of the strong and weak. What is necessary is that the rules of the competition should be obeyed, that the individuals should "play the game," realising their indebtedness to each other. The increasing recognition of the responsibility of possessions and power, and that government is for the sake of the governed—the progress in the fusion of classes and the blotting out of distinctions, show that the Gospel ideals are not ineffective in modern society. Old-time conquerors made the conquered into

slaves or tribute-payers ; in the British Empire the endeavour is to obtain free, willing subjects. On that endeavour rests its hope of continuance.

The second "commandment," like the first, says : "Thou shalt *love* thy neighbour" ; and love, it may be repeated, cannot be created to order. But it may be developed by exercise. Love to one's neighbour can only be a gradual growth from the root of natural sympathy which men have for at least some of their own kind. If there were not this natural source of love between them, no man could learn to love his neighbour. But it is there. And it grows by their increased knowledge of one another. As they overcome the barriers between each other and understand one another better, they find unsuspected good, and begin to perceive how all men are, in different ways, striving towards the same end, and, beneath vastly different appearances, have fundamentally the same divine nature. This was one of the lessons which Jesus steadily impressed on his disciples.

VII.

CHRISTIAN CONDUCT

In the Sermon on the Mount are grouped together many of the sayings of Jesus relating to conduct, and some of them have been found difficult to reconcile, not only with our practice, but with the principles which we honestly believe ought to guide our practice. We read :—

> Blessed are the poor in spirit: for their's is the Kingdom of Heaven.
>
> Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.
>
> Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

But we are impelled to admire men of strong spirit. We believe that cheerfulness is a virtue, and that artificial melancholy is contemptible. And it seems clear to us that strong, self-confident men can do much good that meekness cannot accomplish.

The sayings are not in the imperative mood. To describe certain people as "blessed" is not equivalent to commanding others to imitate them. Only a few verses later we read: "Rejoice and be exceeding glad." To accept these sayings literally as directions for conduct is practically impossible. But they become clear enough if read as encouragement,

The mission of Jesus was mainly to the weak and afflicted. To those who are poor in spirit, or mournful, or meek, to those who are unprosperous and depressed, he says: "Blessed are ye." He teaches that there is a divine justice and compensation, that those who have disadvantages have corresponding advantages, that suffering shall not go without its reward. The weak and sad gain an experience which shall result in joy: they are learners, and their learning shall bear fruit. He does not bid men become the servants of melancholy, but assists them to overcome the melancholy which circumstances have brought. It is no virtue to be weak, but let the weak have confidence, for God is on their side. For the feeble to make virtues of their want of energy or cheerfulness is to invite scorn and to discredit Christianity: they only give ground for the suspicion of effeminacy which some have connected with the Christian religion.

These sayings are not rules of conduct in our relations with our fellow men, but principles lying beneath conduct, indicating our relations to God, the source of our being and doing. Men are active, but they do not create their powers of activity. They are endowed with courage, strength, cheerfulness, before they can make expenditure of them. In relation to God they are passive. The strong, prosperous man is apt to forget such considerations, and to credit his personal self with an

absoluteness and importance to which it has no right. There may come to him a time when some difficulty arises greater than he has met before, and he cannot cope with it, because he has no resources to fall back upon; and he finds that the man he despised is surpassing him. His superiority made him forget his dependence. The instrument thought that the power which it manifested was its own. Jesus directs the attention of his hearers beneath the surface and points out the passive, receptive side of our nature. "In relation to the power which directs the world," he says in effect, "forget not your poverty and helplessness. Do not assume a position to which you have no right, but be humble, meek, and willing to learn. Then you shall be blessed." Beneath the surface of visible good conduct he points out the right spiritual attitude by which to gain the power which produces such conduct. He exhibits man, not as viewed by his fellow man, but from the divine standpoint.

Every communication is, as we noted in Chapter I., relative to the circumstances in which it is made. The speaker takes for granted certain ideas in the minds of his hearers, and his sayings can only be rightly interpreted in the light of those ideas. These sayings of Jesus were (as we think) addressed to certain Jewish peasants by the Sea of Galilee some nineteen hundred years ago; to suppose them addressed to ourselves, with the

ordinary sense which we attach to the words, can only lead us into error. The fisherfolk of Galilee were no doubt well enough acquainted with the active virtues. It is reasonable to suppose that Jesus assumed such acquaintance, and taught them something deeper, not destroying, but fulfilling. Exactly what Jesus had in his mind at the time it is impossible to say. I have indicated what I believe to be the truth of these sayings.

Before considering the doctrine of "non-resistance," the saying, "Take no thought for the morrow" (as it stands in the Authorised Version), may be noted. It seems impossible to follow. But, though it cannot be accepted literally as a universal law of conduct, it is, in many cases, excellent advice, doubtless suited to those who were listening to the Sermon. It is true of some that they sacrifice the future to the present, but others sacrifice the present—and future too—to an imaginary future. Anxiety, worry, fear, are great enemies; by brooding on the dangers of the future the power to meet them may be materially diminished. To people troubled in this way Jesus says: "Behold the sparrows.....Are ye not much better than they?.....Take no thought for the morrow.....Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Here, as in other respects, the teaching of Jesus has received modern verification. H. W. Dresser, speaking of the methods of spiritual

healing, writes[1]: "Put yourself entirely in the present, trustfully, restfully, calmly. You are an immortal soul, and have all eternity before you. Time is of no real consequence." Though the context of these sayings of Jesus indicates that they refer to bodily wants, they may, I think, be truly extended to the soul, bidding men not to be anxious about the future of their souls, but to do their daily work and trust their souls to their Creator. This seems to be the modern tendency. "As a matter of fact," says Sir Oliver Lodge, "the higher man of to-day is not worrying about his sins at all, still less about their punishment. His mission, if he is good for anything, is to be up and doing." The tendency is surely both healthy and Christian.

The "Resist-not-evil" passage—

> Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away[2]—

seems at first sight quite opposed to the principles which govern our conduct. How could conduct of the "turning-the-other-cheek" kind conceivably have good consequences? I suppose that the theory of non-resistance is somewhat as

[1] *Methods and Problems of Spiritual Healing*, p. 22.
[2] Matt. v. 38–42.

follows. The man who does not strive for himself will awaken higher feelings in his opponent, and turn the dislike or hatred with which the latter regarded him into love. By doing good to his enemy he will heap coals of fire on his head. The enemy will be struck with admiration, or at least awe, at such conduct, and will turn in friendliness to the man who so acts. Kindness begets kindness, and the sight of goodness will surely elevate. It may take time, but steadfastness must win in the end.

Does such a theory receive the support of facts? Suppose the refined and good to submit to any treatment at the hands of those inferior to themselves—at the hands of ruffians, to take a more extreme case. These men, both by hereditary instinct and from their own experience, know the world as a hard world of competition. They are impressed by the idea that if a man would live and satisfy his desires he must look out sharply for himself, and that if he does not do so he will go under. Niceties of morality are beyond their ken. To such a man, if he meet with non-resisting submission, all that will be apparent in most cases is that he has found someone weaker and with less knowledge of the world than himself; and he does not doubt that he ought to benefit by his superiority. He takes what he can get, and is unconscious of grossness on his part; and in return he gives not gratitude, but contempt. He

cannot be grateful for a generosity which he does not understand. The sight of goodness elevates, but a man must first have the eyes to see. Also, the view taken by such a man has probably been supported by many having yielded to him from weakness, and from a preference to give up rather than struggle. It is not wonderful if, when he meets the conscientious non-resister, he fail to recognise him. The result is that such treatment increases not his sympathy, but his sense of self-sufficiency. As time goes on, experience will slowly teach him (or his descendants) his dependence, the necessity of law, and that selfishness is unsatisfying. But towards effecting this result the conduct of the non-resister has been in such an unsuitable case useless, or, in less unfavourable cases, uneconomical and inefficient. Universal non-resistance on the part of the best men would simply mean giving up the gains of civilisation and a return to a state whence they would be evolved over again.

Those who are insufficiently developed to perceive high degrees of goodness and beauty respect outward visible strength. They will submit to those evidently stronger than themselves, and be influenced by them. And with willingness; for, to them, might is right, and strength is beauty. It is when men have obtained a considerable degree of insight that they learn that there are higher things in the world than material power.

History has made plain enough the evils that result from want of firmness in government. The working of the Poor Laws has shown the degeneration that results from indiscriminate giving. Tolstoy's experiments in the schoolroom have by no means shown that compulsion can wisely be banished therefrom. The use of force on occasion, suitable retaliation, both by society and the individual, is found by experience to be necessary and beneficial not only for the better who resist, but ultimately also for the worse who are resisted. The mere demonstration of power unused effects much; and such demonstrations must rest on the sound foundation of readiness for use. Law must be supported by force; and Jesus did not come to destroy law, but to show something deeper beyond it.

Is there, then, any place for the method of non-resistance? In spite of what has been said above, there are some cases where it seems to effect good results. Can we find any principle to guide us in its application? It is to be found, I think, in the following considerations. The effect of force on its recipient is inhibitory, restraining, negative. It gives him a practical lesson in what he must *not* do, curbs the ignorant and unlawful use of his powers, preserving from his wilder nature the refinements of the more advanced which he is unable to appreciate. But he is not to be made into a positively better man merely by restraint.

Force alone cannot make an enemy into a friend. Society cannot thereby make willing supporters of its own maintenance. But, by the use of force, time and opportunity may be gained to educate a man (or a boy) by exhibiting to him that which he is able to see to be good, by gradually revealing to him the unity which underlies the world's oppositions. It is useless to show a man an ideal far removed above his head; but show him one step above his own position, and he will take it. Opposition brings into relief a man's individual self; it hardens and concentrates. By non-resistance he may learn the unsubstantial nature of the self, that there is something more real and worth having than private rights—that there are, in fact, ultimately no private rights. An opportune display of mercy to one who is fully conscious of his guilt, timely assistance to one who has worked hard to help himself and has reached the end of his resources, may be a revelation to him of a God in the world of which he had previously no knowledge. Show trust in him by neglecting the precautions which suspicion would suggest, and, if he feel that such trust is not the result of credulity or ignorance, but of confidence in himself, his self-respect will be strengthened; he will endeavour not to disappoint you. He realises more that he is not a stranger and a vagabond in the world and to you; but that he may largely identify himself with you. Make clear to a man

that one is devoted to principle and comparatively careless of oneself; that one aims, not at one's own interests as opposed to his, but at an ideal which includes the highest good of both, and his opposition must tend to cease. The object of his attack is removed. The principle of the solidarity of mankind, that our own good is inextricably bound up with that of our neighbours, underlies the passage. No one has any purely private rights or any right of revenge. As Paul says: "Recompense to no man evil for evil.....avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.....Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."[1] Retaliation is justifiable only as a means to good, never for its own sake. "Poetic justice" belongs to a higher power.

Everyone has a duty to himself. He has some work to do and a place to fill in the scheme of things, and an attack on him is an attack on the whole, which he is justified in resisting, not for the sake of himself alone, but for the sake of all.

The teaching of Jesus confirms the contention that moral evil is not of an absolute nature, but a lack of good—a weakness and ignorance which is therefore only to be overcome by good; that human nature is fundamentally not evil, but good; and that for its state to be essentially improved it

[1] Rom. xii. 17, 19, 21.

must not be driven, but led. And so there is one kind of resistance which is only destructive and indefensible—resistance to a man's spirit. To denounce him as a wicked man, in his inmost self badly intentioned, can only do harm, perhaps the gravest injury.

> Whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire.[1]

"Fool" indicates here, not a mere want of common sense, as the term is used by us, but a moral reprobate, an utterly bad man. No one has the right to judge another's soul. The only right attitude to take towards an opponent, an enemy, or even a criminal, is: "I do not deny that at the bottom of your soul you mean well; but I am convinced that your views and methods are wrong, and I shall resist your putting them into effect; and may God defend the Right."

The belief in universal physical non-resistance seems to rest on an unspiritual view of the nature and purposes of life. Life is largely action. Action must have a purpose—near or remote. And the purpose necessarily involves resistance to be overcome, some problem to be solved, some evil to be attacked. Without some degree of pain and evil life could only evanesce. It is the possibilities of hunger and cold, the existence of wrongs to be righted, that supply something to live for. When

[1] Matt. v. 22.

a man wishes the road were smooth, he is apt to forget that without some friction—some resistance—he could not move along it at all. When a game is made too easy it is spoiled. To resist another is by no means necessarily to inflict a real evil on him. The non-resister, in his attempt to abstain from giving pain, may be the cause of an *ennui* quite as unpleasant. The story of a woman who sought divorce because her husband always agreed with her shows, at any rate, a knowledge of human nature. The happiest schools are not those which possess no cane. Softness and intended kindness are often loathsome. Sweetness cloys, and we find a certain degree of bitterness in our cups preferable. All the good of life, all the fun of life, come from being resisted. Not physical resistance, but that which is spiritual—bitterness of soul, hatred, contempt, which wound the soul—is unchristian and unjustifiable. A man will stand much hard treatment and injury: what he cannot stand is injustice and insult.

> "A wound in the flesh no doubt wants prompt redress;
> It smarts a little to-day, well in a week,
> Forgotten in a month; or never, or now, revenge!
> But a wound to the soul? That rankles worse and worse."

War is a calamity; but by war some of the finest virtues are developed. The use of force is assuredly in some form unavoidable. The final court of appeal in this world, whether in the case of the quarrel between nations, the vital misunderstanding between two citizens, or the dispute

between the law-abiding and the criminal, is necessarily the appeal to arms. Occasions arise for individuals and for nations when they must either allow what they believe to be the right to be trampled on, or resist to the utmost that they are able to do legitimately. When two, both with good intentions, disagree, might must (so far as outward things are concerned) settle the right. History and experience show—and that makes the world hopeful—that, in the long run, right is also might.

In practice (here I confine myself to individuals) the choice of resistance or non-resistance, whether a man will defend or sacrifice himself, depends upon the circumstances of the particular case. The right choice is a result of experience and tact. It is running a risk to use the saintly method; it may lead to failure and ridicule; but the good achieved and reward gained by success are commensurate with the risk. "If he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother." The best things of life are not to be obtained without risk. But a man may count the cost, and make his risks reasonable, in due proportion to his own powers of faith, strength, and knowledge. The stronger a man is, the more will he be able to use successfully the method of non-resistance; and the weak do well not to imitate the ways of the strong. In any case, "love your enemies." Resistance may be consistent with love.

Throughout the Sermon on the Mount there is direction to principle and motive rather than rule of conduct. The Law said, "Thou shalt not kill"; Jesus said, "Whosoever is angry....." The Law said, "Thou shalt not commit adultery"; Jesus said, "Whosoever looketh on a woman....." He points to the deeper spiritual reality underlying material events; that not any visible power or possessions, but the living spirit, is the important matter. We are beginning to learn the lesson—that the big gun is less important than the man behind it; that a kingdom cannot rest securely on the sole support of bayonets, but demands the co-operation of free, happy subjects; that physical force has limitations; that the greatest results can be obtained only by gaining the freely-given allegiance of other men. Continually Jesus directs his hearers to be dissatisfied with appearances, and insists on soundness and reality. The conduct which accords with his principles may or may not be in literal accordance with his words. He deals not so much with the conduct itself as with the foundation on which it should rest; not with the house, but with the rock on which it is to be built.

There cannot be universal rules of action. Right action is that which is suitable to the circumstances. One cannot live by rule: that would mean that one could live mechanically without thinking; and thinking is a great part of life. Every game-player knows how futile is the man who always acts

according to rule, compared to the man who can bring his intelligence to bear on a situation and himself determine at the moment the best course to pursue. The use of rules is to economise thought, that it may have opportunity to seek further and deeper, not to supersede it. Doing right is a question of balancing opposites, of harmonising the claims of self and others, of justice and mercy, present and future, work and rest, resistance or non-resistance. The best conduct is that which results from the finest equipoise: perfect conduct is impossible.

Good conduct is the result of reasonableness. On one occasion Jesus said to his disciples:—

> Take nothing for your journey, neither staves, nor scrip, neither bread, neither money; neither have two coats apiece.[1]

At another time it was:—

> He that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one.[2]

He said: "Resist not"; but we find in another place:—

> Think not that I am come to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.[3]

Jesus set the great example of using his own judgment. It is for us to follow that example: to keep the end—God, Perfection—in view, and to take what steps we find best calculated to help us on.

[1] Luke ix. 3. [2] Luke xxii. 36. [3] Matt. x. 34.

Unlawful means are those which produce an apparently good result which is unsound, contrary to the nature of things, and therefore really bad. In action it may be necessary and right to compromise; there need not and must not be a compromise of principle.

The teaching of Jesus on self-denial has been the subject of much misconception. The following passage refers to the subject:—

> Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?[1]

Teachers of "religion" have often endeavoured to impress on their hearers the duty of self-denial, of a man's giving up what seems good to him, and devoting himself to the service of Christ. And the kind of teaching that has been given perhaps accounts, to a considerable degree, for the aversion with which "religion" is regarded by many.

In one view, self-denial is conceived and preached as a discipline, as a means of developing self-control. The Churches of England and Rome set apart a lengthy period of the year for special practice of this kind. Professor James says: "Keep the faculty of effort alive in you by a little

[1] Matt. xvi. 24.

gratuitous exercise every day. That is, be systematically ascetic or heroic in little unnecessary points; do every day or two something for no other reason than that you would rather not do it, so that when the hour of dire need draws nigh it may find you not unnerved and untrained to stand the test."[1] Such directions require, I think, qualification.

The faculty of effort must be kept alive by use, but it is better if it be used to achieve some useful external purpose. For the development of the body it is necessary to resort sometimes to artificial means, if there be no purpose to provide the necessary exercise. But better results are obtained when the attention is fixed on some object to be reached than when the exercise is undertaken for its own sake. A game is healthier than dumb-bells or an exerciser, and a walk with a purpose than a "constitutional." And the powers of mental effort are in like manner more healthily developed by effort directed towards some useful object. There is no limit to the objects requiring effort to be spent on them, and the best results both for the subject and the world will be gained by his attending to one or more of these objects. Herbert Spencer says[2]:—

> Everywhere throughout creation we find faculties developed through the performance of those functions which it is their office to perform; not through the

[1] *Principles of Psychology*, vol. i., p. 126.
[2] *Education*, chap. i.

performance of artificial exercises devised to fit them for those functions.

There may be circumstances in which a man is for a time more or less barred from useful work; then artificial exercises are fitting. Men out of employment have to "keep their hands in." To the men who shut themselves up in monasteries apart from the world's work, fastings and ascetic practices must have been necessary. To those who have more energy than they are able for the time to find objects to spend it on, such exercises may form a convenient vent. Self-denial is the religious "constitutional." But there are some who feel that they have not a tithe of the energy they would like to effect their aims. For such people artificial exercises are so much waste. And there are a few who overrun the mark, who would be stronger and do better work in the world if they treated themselves better.

Self-denial is only good, and will only do a man good, if he, in his inmost self, thoroughly consent to it. If he so act only because he is persuaded to do so—if the result is on the whole disagreeable to him, the action will weaken his will, not strengthen it. It is not a voluntary self-denial, not really an exercise of his inmost self. It is on the whole painful; it is too much for the strength; it strains and damages. A man grows strong by performing tasks within his ability, not by attempting those which are beyond it. Men benefit themselves by

facing wind and weather, by voluntarily undergoing discomforts, by hard exercise, because they rejoice in the use of their powers. A cold bath is good if it be followed by a warm glow, not otherwise. True "self-denial" must be denial by the self as well as of the self. It is really self-expression, not a denial of one's inward most real nature, but of an apparent lower self. It is not to do things which are really painful to your spirit, but those which, though in appearance they are painful, and though they were perhaps once painful to you, are so no longer. As a man develops, he gets to understand that "self-denial," directed to an approved purpose, is not so much a duty as a privilege. In Matthew Arnold's words: "Not only 'It is more *right* to give than to receive' more rational, more necessary; but, 'It is more *blessed* to give than to receive.'" And Maeterlinck says: "It is not by renouncing the joys that are near us that we shall grow wise; but as we grow wise we unconsciously abandon the joys that are now beneath us. Even so does the child as years come to him give up one by one without thinking the games that have ceased to amuse." "Sacrifice never should be the means of ennoblement, but only the sign of being ennobled." "There is beauty in simple self-sacrifice when its hour has come unsought." "There are certain ideas that prevail on renouncement, resignation, and sacrifice, that are far more destructive to the

most beautiful moral forces of man than great vices, or even crimes."[1] When we are told to "take up the white man's burden," we feel pride, not pain. The soldier who volunteers for a forlorn hope, or the miner for a dangerous rescue, does so with enthusiasm. That is the real self-denial —the result of having learnt that the highest, most real good is spiritual, of forgetting the lower desires in the pursuit of those more valued. I do not believe that what is good for us is necessarily or normally different from what seems good to us; our fundamental instincts are, and must be, our chief guides.

A fine character is the result of a gradual growth. It is possessed by an enthusiasm for higher things by which lower desires are necessarily subordinated. When a man becomes convinced of the greater worth of higher aims, his less worthy inclinations lose power over him. The man devoted to some enterprise often grudges the time that must be spent on eating. And such a state is reached not so much by denying as by pursuing; it is the result of possessing wide sympathies and knowledge, the result of a process not well described as giving up what one likes, but rather as seeking what one really thinks best, the consequence of obeying the great commandment. It may have meant checking some bodily inclinations; but any conscious checking has been understood

[1] *Wisdom and Destiny.*

to be a scientific necessity, and has not been performed for the denial's sake. The way of progress is not to give up things that you enjoy merely because you think it will do you good to deny yourself thus, but to give up that which you see clearly to be incompatible by nature with your greatest happiness. Not to deny oneself some innocent pleasure for forty days every year, but to deny oneself at any time any pleasure that one discovers not to be innocent. Not to be ascetic, but sensible. Asceticism is a perversion of human nature.

When an idea assumes a prominent place in consciousness it tends to result in action. To strive directly against one's inclinations is to give them a prominent place in consciousness, and so to assist to bring about the actions that one is endeavouring to avoid. To turn one's thoughts away from self to the ideals one is aiming at is the safe and right way—to lose oneself, as the words of Jesus direct; not to resist the evil, but to overcome it by good.

Jesus does not bid a man to make himself a cross, but to "take up his cross"—the cross with which circumstances have provided him, as they provide one at some time to everybody. Not to manufacture difficulties or consciously and purposely to deny himself, but to grapple with the ills that are, shirking nothing. It is "lose yourself," not "look at yourself." He did not tell his disciples to

fast; and when the Pharisees complained, he used the words:—

> Can the children of the bride-chamber fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them they cannot fast. But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.[1]

Such a practice was to be kept until a proper occasion for it arose, not to be undertaken of set purpose.

"Deny yourself" may be interpreted by the words, "Go on," used in the last chapter. Self-indulgence is in essence a slackness, a contented submission to what is pleasant at the moment, for the sake of the feelings thereby aroused, as opposed to striving for what is more sound. Whether or no it means bodily inactivity, it means inactivity of spirit. And self-indulgence means degeneration. (That is, of course, when it is in undue degree. There must be periods of passivity and recreation.) Passive impressions weaken with repetition; and if a man does not find higher pleasures to replace those which are gradually ceasing to affect him, he gradually loses life *pari passu*. If he would keep his life, he must look beneath the surface; he must work and learn; he must look beyond material things to the inner principles which are eternal. He must not cease to grow, but always act up to his knowledge. He must not forget the great commandment.

[1] Mark ii. 19.

But self-denial may mean more than self-discipline; it may be self-consecration, and this seems to be meant in the passage quoted (p. 137). It is a giving up of the whole life. Such consecration is not sound and true unless it be perfectly free and willing—a consecration by the self as well as of the self. A man who gives up his life to enter a monastery, or to become a missionary, because he is told that he ought to do so, and not because he is enthusiastic to do so, makes a terrible mistake. Jesus said, in effect, that, if any man *desired* to come after him, he should not allow himself to be hindered from doing so by any material ties or by the hardships that he would, in consequence, be likely to encounter. The disciples found their ideal in Jesus, and he directs them to pursue their ideal, at the same time warning them of the cost. This pursuit of the ideal is the essence of the teaching, divested of the personal and material form in which it appealed to his immediate hearers:—That men should seek and follow what they feel to be best, in spite of the obstacles in the way; that, if one would have the best, one must be prepared to give up many small pleasures and meet many difficulties.

Self-consecration is not giving up all that one values in life in payment for happiness in another world, but a devotion to what one sees in this world to be best, which necessitates a subordination of small and private interests. It comes

from a man's feeling that his comfort or private concerns are of little account compared to his ideals: the feeling which makes the patriot gladly die for his country, the lover for his mistress, the martyr for his principles. It is the sacrifice of the man who gladly sold all that he had to obtain the pearl of great price. And it is not a mere question of decision. The decision is only the indication of the mature consciousness which recognises its own incompleteness and dependence, which realises the transient nature of bodily life, and subordinates that which "moth and rust doth corrupt" to the spiritual joys which are seen to be better—the joys of seeking, perceiving, loving. There is recognition of a higher power in the world than one's own, and a trust that one will get the most out of life by submitting to its dictates, so far as they can be ascertained.

VIII.

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE

It is often said in the pulpit that we ought to attend church frequently, because (as it is implied if not expressed) religious observances are a duty we owe to God. Sunday, the day of rest, is called a holy day which should be devoted mainly to these religious duties. And because the present age does not appear to advantage as estimated by these precepts it is denounced as irreligious. But such teaching is very far from that of Jesus in the Gospels. On one occasion there was a dispute between Jesus and the Pharisees concerning the Sabbath. The passage in St. Matthew is:—

> At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn and to eat. But when the Pharisees saw it they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which it is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day. But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him; how he entered into the house of God and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the Priests? Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the Priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless? But I say unto you, that in this place is one greater than the temple. But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy and not

> sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day. And when he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue: and, behold, there was a man which had his hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might accuse him. And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days.[1]

There is the usual appeal to the understanding. Sabbath observance was not to be considered as an arbitrary command, to be received on authority, and obeyed without reasoning. It was a means only, and must be considered in the light of the end, man's health, which it has to serve. The kernel of the question is in the statement recorded by St. Mark, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath."

Men cannot go on working continuously. They must have periods for recreation. They are made for reflection as well as action, and in working hours they have to be almost entirely absorbed in the business of the moment; they are to a great extent lost in the objects to which they are attending. They want holidays on which they may be more conscious of themselves, and their relations to the objective world—opportunities when they may be able to take a wider survey of life, to look to the past and the future, to consider if they are

[1] Matt. xii. 1, etc.

spending life to the best advantage—in short, to attend to their religion. Holiness means wholeness, and Sunday may well be called a holy-day, if "holy" be used in a rational sense: a day for viewing life as a whole. A holy-day is a holiday. The words are, of course, in origin the same; but the accepted meanings are not the same. The words "holy" and "sacred" imply something mysterious and supernatural, to be approached not simply with reverence, but with fear; something supremely authoritative and beyond discussion. To view Sunday in such a way is neither rational nor Christian; it is merely sacerdotal. That in former ages the Sabbath and the Lord's Day should have been looked upon as supernatural institutions is what our knowledge of history would lead us to expect. There is no need to perpetuate the old ideas. And yet, on the other hand, a true day of rest must now be distinguished from the ordinary week-day holiday. For, though the latter be spent in what are called recreations, such recreations as games, sight-seeing, etc., are nowadays commonly taken very seriously; and rest and reflection require freedom from serious work.

Sunday, as the day of rest, is a day for release as far as possible from the cares of this world—a day primarily for receptivity and recreation. But in real life there are not the sharp distinctions which are made in thought. A man cannot cease entirely from activity while he is conscious. Rest,

when he is awake, means a change of activity. Reflection is mental activity. For the sedentary worker physical labour may be excellent rest. It is a matter of emphasis: in working hours the work receives first consideration; in holiday-time the work gives precedence to the worker. There is no prescribed method of spending the day; if a man finds himself more refreshed by reading at home, or by walking, cycling, or boating, than by listening to chants which he has heard from his youth, or to words of instruction which do not impress him, who shall condemn him? Certainly Jesus does not. A friendly game of golf or lawn-tennis, on which no serious issues depend, may be excellent recreation for those who spend the week in other pursuits. It is said that Calvin played bowls on Sunday afternoon. The Fourth Commandment does not say, "Thou shalt not play." If innocent activities are prohibited, men will certainly loaf and gossip, and the day is made merely a breeding-time for unhealthy thoughts. The principle of the day of rest is consistent with cricket on the village green or a country excursion; it is not promoted by idleness at the street-corner. Many people can sympathise with the troubles which Sunday has brought to children, whose activities are more bodily and visible than those of their elders. Here is an answer obtained by Professor Starbuck from an American—a more than usually hard case :—

> Among all my childish troubles "keeping the Sabbath holy" and being slicked up and dragged to church and Sunday school were the most dreadful. On Sundays we could not whittle, go faster than a walk, go down to the river, laugh, play in any way, whistle, etc. Sunday was a black chasm. No one who has not passed through it can imagine how I felt as Saturday night drew on. It was as if I were about to "walk through the valley of the shadow of death." We were obliged to spend the day at church and Sunday school, both of which I loathed. I must have listened to a certain pastor for nearly ten years; but the only impression left on my mind was of a blue-jay jumping up and down on a limb and scolding me at the top of his voice, and I hated the sight, or even thought, of him. In addition to the torture of church and Sunday school, we were obliged to commit to memory whole psalms, chapters of the Bible, hymns; and the thing I worst of all detested was the reading of certain so-called "religious books." I rather enjoyed *Pilgrim's Progress*; but one particular book caused me more distress than everything else in my boyish experience put together. It is Jeremy Taylor's *Memoirs*. I never got more than half through it, but I was compelled to read at it for years. Such an utter loathing was developed toward that book that it seems as if even now it would be an agreeable pastime to tear out the leaves one by one and crumple and burn them.[1].....

Many and intense are the cruelties which have been, and are still, perpetrated in the name of Christ! It may be said that parents now treat their children more sensibly. Yes; but the progress has been made in the face of the teaching of their religious instructors. Any tendency towards taking a more sensible and liberal view of the function of the Day of Rest has been

[1] *Psychology of Religion*, p. 302.

denounced from the pulpit as an encouragement of Sabbath-breaking. And further progress will have to reckon with the same opposition. A day spent as described above is far from being a day of rest; it is a real Sabbath-breaking. It is essential that the rest-day be spent contentedly; that it be regarded not as demanding, but as giving—not as a duty, but a privilege. The Sabbath was made for man: and not for a discipline. The labour of the week provides discipline. Sunday is a day of release, and for the greatest possible amount of freedom.

The increased provision of music and the opening of art galleries on Sundays seem to be thoroughly in accord with the spirit of the day—a day for realising something of the divine spirit of unity and harmony which lies beneath the surface of things. The object of art is to disclose that spirit. And if a man finds that he realises the divine spirit more powerfully in the fields—it was in the fields that Jesus and his disciples were walking on the Sabbath—or by the sea, or in his own study, than in the churches as at present conducted, he has the Christian right to use the day in the way which he finds brings him most benefit. God is God of the Universe, not merely of the Cloister, to be found not only in church. In these days, generally speaking, God may be found more clearly elsewhere. Flowers may often teach as much as a "first lesson"; and a sunset may

inspire more than a reredos lighted by flickering candles. The woman of Samaria said to Jesus :—

> Our fathers worshipped in this mountain ; and ye say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.....But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth : for the Father seeketh such to worship him.[1]

There is one restriction to be kept in view : to bear in mind the Second Commandment ; not to forget one's neighbour in one's arrangement of the rest-day : to see that one's recreations are not at others' expense. In practice there must always be compromise. If provision is to be made for Sunday music or expeditions, the necessary performers must be found to do the work. But such work is of the nature of the priests' work. "Have ye not read in the law," said Jesus, "how that, on the Sabbath day, the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are blameless?" To provide for the recreation of the many, the few must sacrifice their holiday. Such sacrifice ought to be made good to the performers. There are many advantages in having regular, appointed days of rest ; but no periods of time have a monopoly of holiness. It is a man's duty in this, as in other matters, to do as he would be done by.

It may be said that Sunday is not merely a day

[1] John iv. 20, 21, 23.

of rest, but the "Lord's Day," a memorial of Jesus and his resurrection. That was what it meant to the early Christians; but we cannot, after eighteen hundred years, feel and act quite like men who either themselves knew Jesus in the flesh, or knew men who had so known him. And historical criticism compels us to be uncertain whether the Resurrection, as well as other recorded events, really took place. So it is necessary for us to place less importance on the events of the past, and to attend rather to what they signify spiritually. Jesus would have us look towards the goal at which he pointed rather than towards his own person. He would have us spend Sunday, not in a more or less mechanical repetition of words relating to himself, but in seeking God—seeking beauty and truth—as he himself would have spent the day. He would not desire an artificially maintained memorial, but a spontaneous living one in the souls of those who have the Christ-like spirit. He did not approve of looking backwards, as is seen in this incident:—

> He said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the Kingdom of God.[1]

At another time he said: "Remember Lot's wife." The episcopal churches exhibit a distinct tendency to become pillars of salt.

[1] Luke ix. 59.

Other religious ordinances are to be considered in the same light as that of the Sabbath day. Jesus said to the Pharisees: "If ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless." The quotation is from Hosea, where the full verse is:—

> For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.[1]

The prophet declared the subordinate and unessential character of religious rites and ceremonies. Such observances are means only; and means differ according to circumstances. A reference Bible directs from this passage to a similar one in Micah, which, though it is not mentioned by Jesus like the other, points out the same truth so clearly that I quote it:—

> Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?[2]

When the rich ruler came to Jesus, asking what he should do to inherit eternal life, he was not directed to be diligent at the synagogue or the temple, but to be moral, and, as a counsel of perfection, to give up all he had for his fellows. On other occasions

[1] Hosea vi. 6.

[2] Micah vi. 6, 7, 8.

than that of the corn-fields, the disciples were accused for their want of conformity to the religious customs of the Jews on account of their not fasting, and for eating with unwashed hands. Each time Jesus defended them vigorously, and in the latter case replied with an attack on the traditions of the Pharisees.

Worship may be given otherwise than on the physical knees, and praise is not confined to hymn singing. Certain places and ceremonials are from old associations held to be sacred by many who have made use of them, and thus may churches and their services be considered sacred. But the distinction is a relative one—relative to the worshipper. Any place or symbol which is connected with the deeper, tenderer moments of a man's life is sacred for him; the scene of a struggle, the spot which witnessed a meeting or a parting, anything which is vividly associated in his mind with the ultimate realities of life and death and God. That is really the meaning of "sacred," and that is what is implied by "sacred" in literature. But as used by "religious" people the word has a far narrower meaning. By them the words "religious" and "sacred" are used, in contradistinction to the word "secular," to denote the traditional symbols of religion. Men think less of these than did their forefathers, and so we are sometimes said to live in an irreligious and secular age. But these particular symbols have no exclusive natural

right to the attributes "sacred" and "religious." The distinction between "religious" and "secular" arises from the view of religion as consisting of a number of traditions received on authority. With truer views of the nature of religion the distinction will go out of use. It is not only churches, bibles, prayer-books, Sundays, and crosses, etc., that are sacred; all symbols intimately related to life are sacred. The real antithesis is between the serious or fundamental and the superficial. "Religious" or "sacred" denotes that which is concerned with a man's inmost life—his real self, his God, as opposed to his every-day surface life and its trivialities. Any time or place, object or act, intimately connected with the life of his soul is sacred and holy for him. It is personal association that makes things sacred. "For the poet, the philosopher, and the saint," Emerson says, "all things are sacred."

It was not against the use of religious symbols and ceremonies, but against their mistaken use and wrong views as to their nature, that Jesus spoke. The world as we know it is matter as well as spirit. The ideal can only be understood from acquaintance with the concrete. There can be no thought without symbols to think with; and the deeper and more ideal the subject in question, the more extended and complex is their use. So in religious matters men require material symbols through which they may perceive the pervading spirit; symbols which

will appeal to their senses and hold their attention. Objects of no value in themselves have the highest value if they be trophies, souvenirs, or relics. Gothic arches, deep organ tones, the kneeling posture, and the cross may all help to make religion more real. But there are less conventional symbols. Jesus taught in the open air, and his materials were such as the lilies of the field and the sparrows. It is necessary to protest against the exclusiveness which will not recognise the use of symbols other than the traditional ones, and against the materialism which does not see that the value of all symbols depends on their associations. If the recognised teachers of Christianity are unable to associate their traditional symbols in the minds of present-day congregations with ideas of real truth and beauty, it is inevitable that those symbols should lose in sacredness.

Nothing of a definite material nature, whether ceremony, dogma, or historical fact, is of any estimation by itself. The Jews declared with pride that they were children of Abraham, and the Church of England speaks in a similar tone of the Episcopal Succession. But we read that John the Baptist said: "Think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father; for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham." The "laying on of hands" is a ceremony calculated to impress those who take part in it. And that is all. To suppose that any

virtue passes from the mere act is gross materialism and superstition. In like manner the Baptismal Service may mean something to an individual who can think, even if the ceremony was performed upon him before he was old enough to do so. But apart from what he is conscious about it, it is nothing. Between the unconscious infant being carried to the font and the same being carried home later there is not one iota of difference spiritually.

If a man finds himself inspired by other than the traditional symbols; if by music, poetry, flowers, he finds himself kindled with enthusiasm towards God and peace towards men, why should he give them up for the old services which depress and irritate him? If he finds greater blessing in giving "a cup of cold water" than in receiving "the cup of wine," he is not bound to make use of the traditional sacrament. Jesus may have suggested bread and wine to his disciples as symbols by which to remember him; for the disciples these would have the closest associations with the friend they had loved. If men at the present day find that these symbols, as commonly presented in the Communion Service, have not the same associations, they have the Christian liberty to dispense with the use of them. Martineau wrote:—

> When we notice the slight and transient manner in which he drops his wish that they would "do this in remembrance of" him; when we compare these features of the account with the elaborate precision of Moses

> respecting hours, and materials, and dates, and places, and modes in the establishment of the Hebrew festivals, it is scarcely possible to avoid the impression that we are reading narrative, not law; an utterance of personal affection, rather than the legislative enactment of an everlasting institution.[1]

To say that baptism and the Lord's Supper are "generally necessary to salvation" is the teaching of the Tudor theologians who compiled the Prayer Book; it is certainly not the teaching of Jesus.

There are many men to-day, not only of good moral character, but of fine and generous character, who pay little heed to "religious" observance. And there are men who care nothing for "religion" who will gladly help their fellows in distress or die for their country. Are such men inferior to the respectable church-going citizen who keeps out of harm's way? It may be said that such men would at any rate be benefited if they were "religious." But, if they found benefit in what is described to them as "religion," they would be eager for it. A man has an appetite for food for his spirit just as he has for food for his body. The only sense in which religious observance is a duty is that in which it is a duty to take food. And it is also a man's duty not to take those kinds of food which he cannot digest. As to what kinds are good for him no one has a right to dictate to him; his own feelings and knowledge must decide. The priest speaks of certain "divinely-appointed means of grace"; but in so

[1] *Christianity Without Priest or Ritual*, p. 35.

doing he arrogates to his own ceremonies an exclusive right to which they have no sound title.

There is a great resemblance between the contest of opinion on religion to-day and that in the time of Jesus. Much of our "Christianity" approaches far more nearly in spirit to the religion of the Jews than to the teaching of Jesus. The undue deference to tradition and to the letter, and the duty of a rigid observance of the ceremonies of religion, are aspects of Judaism which Jesus opposed. But through want of the eyes to see, through our dependence on symbols, and through wrong notions of the nature of the Old Testament writings, his teaching has been a great parable which has not been understood. We are taught by "Christian" teachers to look on Sunday as (or much as) the Jews looked upon the Sabbath, and to regard religious observances as the Jews regarded theirs. But Jesus taught both by precept and example, both in his public encounters with the priests of the Jews and in his private relations with his disciples, that henceforth the priest was to be not an authority, but a minister, a servant. Religion was made for man, not man for religion.

As time goes on all material things change; only the spirit is eternal. However great the history of any religious symbols, and whatever their value in the past, they cannot keep that value. Progress requires the use of new, more refined symbols. Religion is intimately related to life, and life means

continual renewal of outward parts. That with which a man is familiar does not make the impression on him that it did when it was new to him. In childhood birthdays are fêtes of great importance; the man of thirty hardly gives them a thought. Why should men be expected to value the ritual of hundreds of years ago? It cannot possibly mean the same to them as it did to its originators. Jesus was defending his disciples for not keeping the rite of fasting when he used those words:—

> No man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine doth burst the bottles, and the wine is spilled, and the bottles will be marred; but new wine must be put into new bottles.[1]

That is what is happening to-day: the new wine has burst the old bottles.

The modern ruler does not use the same ceremonial or so much of it as did the ancient king. And the religion of the future will show a like modification. Not because it will be less practical or outwardly effective, but because it will claim a wider sphere and more varied use of symbols, not confining itself to mediæval customs, but using any times, places, objects, or practices which individuals find to be effective in expressing and sustaining their highest aspirations, their inmost soul-life.

What is praise to God but expression of the joy

[1] Mark ii. 22.

of living, an expression of appreciation of the good to be found in the world? Praise is not necessarily a matter of words. Nelson's men praised him most by their manner of fighting. Men praise God best by living well, by their joyful use of the life which has been given them. And what is prayer but the expression of our aspirations? Whether or no, when the attention is earnestly concentrated on some desire, especially if it be by a number of persons simultaneously, any effect is produced other than that on the spirits of those who pray, is for the psychical science of the future to show. But a man prays by his work. That is the expression of his desires without any necessary use of words. And this kind of prayer does produce results. "The prayer of the farmer kneeling in his field to weed it, the prayer of the rower kneeling with the stroke of his oar, are true prayers heard throughout nature, though for cheap ends."[1]

As to what constitutes a religious assembly no rigid line can be drawn. Any assembly in which the moving idea is direct spiritual benefit is a more or less religious one. A serious concert or drama may exercise a more powerful influence over the spirit than many church services. And if such be the case, they are more really religious meetings than the orthodox ones. The meetings of a choral society or a friendly cricket match may be more

[1] Emerson, Essay on "Self-Reliance."

truly services of praise than many that bear the name.

Taking into account the fundamentally individual nature of religion, it seems doubtful if, among the most developed classes, there will be religious assemblies in the future anything like those of the past. Taking the whole world for their temple and all time for their Sundays, men will seek instruction here and self-expression there, wherever they can find and give the best. When Paul wrote, "How shall they hear without a preacher?" there was no printing. Many now may prefer to learn from the pen rather than the tongue. Having learnt to judge for themselves, many men will, as a general rule, not need the help of pastor or priest, and seek these only in time of perplexity. Jesus taught that all men are sons of God, needing no mediators in religious matters. He attended the synagogue and the temple, but gave no sign that he considered such attendance important or such institutions permanent.

Professor Starbuck sums up religious growth in three stages: "In childhood, conform; in youth, be thyself; in maturity, lose thyself" (in some worthy service). So many religious teachers to-day scarcely seem to see their way beyond the first stage. The Churches, which take to so large an extent an Old Testament rather than a Christian point of view, have been able, like "the law" of which Paul speaks, to do a schoolmastering work;

but we are growing beyond that stage to one of thinking for ourselves, the stage of freedom limited by the self-imposed restrictions which are seen to be necessary. The multiplication of the sects, and the increase in influence of the Free Churches in comparison with the Episcopal Churches, are indications of the individual trend of thought.

Of spiritual advisers to alleviate or cure the ills of the mind there will be as much need as of doctors to cure those of the body. Perhaps an increased knowledge of the inter-dependence of mind and body will make the two classes to a great extent one, and there will be evolved spiritual experts to help both mind and body—as we read that Jesus did. The part of the minister of religion is to inspire and instruct, when they require it, those having less power and knowledge than himself. So he should be a man of considerable knowledge of the nature of life—a knowledge not merely of certain traditions, but one based on his own experience; a scientific knowledge which will bear practical tests. And he should (ideally) be a man whose nature and character elicit the enthusiasm of those who come to him for assistance—an enthusiasm for the beautiful and the good, and for himself as a symbol of those ideals. At present ministers, following the tradition of an anthropomorphic God, look upon themselves as merely ambassadors of this Great King, to expound his messages recorded in the Bible, and to arrange

services in his honour. But they, commonly, do not show much understanding of life, and consequently do not inspire great confidence in other men. And this is not surprising, for they do not receive the necessary training. They read much of the opinions of men who lived in the past—the Biblical writers, the Early Fathers, and so forth; but they would do better to think more for themselves, to learn Ethics, Psychology, and Philosophy in a scientific manner, instead of picking up fragments of these from ancient writers. They are in the position in which medical men would be if the latter were trained solely by instruction concerning the work of Harvey, Jenner, and other famous physicians, instead of being shown the latest methods in the hospitals. We should not think much of such doctors. Is it wonderful that men are showing a like want of confidence in the clergy by their non-attendance at religious services?

Among the orthodox representatives of "Christianity" there seems to be a considerable fear of plain speaking concerning the changes of attitude which are seen—even, to some extent, among themselves—to be necessary with regard to religious authorities and religious observances. They do not trust men's powers of self-control, and think it necessary to restrain them by encouraging the old belief in a supernatural power. But this old belief has, to a great extent, gone, and it cannot be

recalled. The only substitute is rational teaching based on present experience. Rationalism does not destroy authority; but when, as is inevitable in the course of time, the established authorities are questioned, it points to the foundation on which they rest, and to the material modifications which are necessary. It does not destroy the law, but fulfils it. The fear of rational teaching is the old Tory distrust of people which gives established institutions a prior place to the people for whom they exist—the narrow view which prefers to prop up a worn-out authority because it is unable to comprehend a new one. It is the fear which prompts the repressive tactics of the Russian Government and Church to-day. In England such methods have been banished from civil life, and the result is vigour; they have not yet been wholly expelled from our religion. Such measures are those of a despotic authority, an absolute monarchy; and their employment in religion results from the common Judaistic view that we are all the subjects of a great king. But the teaching of Jesus was that the kingdom of heaven is approached by reason and freedom, and means the reign of a spiritual God who is manifested in ourselves. He made religion democratic; his so-called followers have in the main failed to follow where he led. Jesus told the disciples to feed his sheep; and mental food means that which can be assimilated by the mind—*i.e.*, rational teaching.

To counterbalance the disintegrating tendency of new ideas there is the conservative force of habit; new ideas have to overcome quite sufficient resistance before they become practically effective, without any artificial attempts to hinder them. And such artificial attempts only increase the difficulties they are intended to remove.

Erasmus said: "It may be the safer course to conceal the state-mysteries of kings; but Christ desired his mysteries to be spread abroad as openly as possible."[1]

[1] From J. R. Green's *Short History of the English People*, p. 618, Illustrated Edition.

IX.

CONTINUITY IN RELIGION

In the last chapter the untrue nature of the distinction between "sacred" and "secular" was noted. The idea which dominates that chapter and all these pages is the necessity of breaking down the wall of mystery and authority with which the "religious" enclose religion, if we would find truth, or help others to find it. The notion of religion as founded on a particular supernatural manifestation in the past must give way to that of a reasonable, all-inclusive explanation of the experience of the present. The natural and the spiritual are closely and intelligibly related. Beneath all distinctions there is an underlying unity. Progress is manifested by an ever-increasing perception of the relations between things as well as of their differences. The differences between things are external and comparatively easy to see; their unity is inward and not so easily perceived. That some things are more sacred than others, some things better than others, is obvious to everyone. What is not so evident is the real nature of the distinctions. The tendency among the "religious" is to over-emphasise them, to make them absolute when

they are relative only. And that is as bad a fault as to insufficiently recognise them. To attribute to Sunday an irrational sanctity is to take away from the sanctity of other days; and to attribute to a church more sanctity than it is rationally entitled to, compared with other places, is to take away the sanctity of other places. The result is that men are encouraged to think of religion as the concern of one day only in the week, or a matter mainly to do with the inside of a church or chapel, instead of regarding it as the science and art of life, the concern of all time and every place. There are many men whose ordinary week-day life is sharply separated from what they call their religion. That is because their ordinary life is guided by reason, while their "religion" is supernatural.

The life of Jesus was devoted to breaking down rigid distinctions and making clear the underlying unity. He taught of spiritual matters by means of natural symbols, showing the relation between them. He strove against the exclusiveness with which the Jew regarded the Gentile. It was to a Roman soldier he said: "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel." Can we not imagine him saying to a Japanese soldier to-day, "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Christendom"? He took the part of the publican and the sinner, disgusting the respectable classes by his association with such people. The distinction between good and bad he took for granted, and

showed its relative nature, finding the good in the bad. The Pharisee despised the publican, and thanked God that he was different; Jesus associated himself with the publican, entered into his point of view, and indicated that, in spite of worse morals, he might be higher in the kingdom of heaven. He comprehended the law in a single principle—Love. He went about harmonising, reconciling, tolerating external differences, including them in the one spirit.

A distinction is made between the "Christian" and the man who is not a "Christian." And this is sometimes meant to indicate, not merely that the "Christian" holds certain orthodox views about Jesus, but that there is an inward supernatural difference in his nature. Some hold that this difference is the result of the baptismal ceremony. That is a superstitious tradition to which experience gives no support. Others hold that the difference arises from "conversion." By this experience his nature is held to be radically altered from that of other men; there is a "second-birth." The subject must come to an acute consciousness of his own "sinfulness." He must then "believe on Jesus," and "surrender himself entirely to Jesus." He must trust no longer in his own efforts, but have complete faith that Jesus will work through and for him; that, in fact, Jesus has already saved him in spite of himself. Henceforth

it is to be for him, in Paul's words, "not I, but Christ, liveth in me." Intense concentration in this mental attitude has brought to many such an assurance of safety, such an overwhelming sense of happiness and power, as to constitute a crisis in their lives. Their characters have changed, bad habits have been given up, and they have become positive workers for good in the world. It is not to be denied that these conversion experiences have produced real and remarkable results, and that there is, therefore, an element of truth in them. But there is no need to consider the process as supernatural, or that the post-conversion consequences are not the natural result of the pre-conversion antecedents. Similar results have occurred without any consciousness of the idea of Jesus. When a man arrives at a solution of any difficulty he has a feeling of pleasure and power, though the problem be only an acrostic. If the difficulty be great and the solution important to his welfare, these feelings are proportionately increased. How intense, then, should we not expect his emotions to be when the question affects his whole life here and hereafter, and when the preliminary state has been something not very different from despair? Professor Starbuck, after a wide inquiry of those who have passed through the conversion experience, writes :—

> As we have proceeded we have seen the facts of conversion falling together more and more in such a way as

> to suggest a reading of the whole experience as a natural psychological process. Before we go on to an interpretation of it as a whole, it will be of advantage if we are convinced still further, one way or the other, whether or not it is explainable in terms of the normal mental activities which function in common experience. One of the best means will be to inquire whether there are, among the so-called natural (*i.e.*, non-religious) experiences, phenomena analogous to those which appear in each stage of conversion.[1]

He then describes cases of sudden awakenings and changes in emotional attitude, and of the breaking of habits, which have occurred independently of "religious" ideas, and concludes :—

> In these common experiences we find analogies to all the steps of conversion, even the most unaccountable and mysterious. Now let us think clearly on the significance of them. They do not explain conversion. The breaking of a habit, as far as ultimate explanation goes, is itself as mysterious as anything that happens in consciousness. These facts do make intelligible, however, the processes involved in conversion, in the same way that any natural phenomena come to be understood. They help us to see a little way into the mental operations concerned in conversion. They also make it clear that, *however inexplicable, the facts of conversion are manifestations of natural processes.* We accept them as natural laws, because we see them working here and there and everywhere in the psychic life.[2]

Conversion, he finds, occurs commonly at about the age of adolescence. It seems to be the result of unsuitable religious teaching, which results later in a mental difficulty that becomes acute and causes a crisis. When a youth has been impressed with

[1] *Psychology of Religion*, p. 135. [2] *Ibid*, p. 143.

ideas of his sinfulness, and of the eternal punishment of sinners, it happens that he comes to be possessed by the idea of his being an outcast; he does not know what to do for himself, and becomes hopeless. Then someone tells him with assurance, or he somehow learns, that he must do nothing but simply trust, and leave himself unconditionally to a higher, all-powerful, and wholly benevolent keeping. He feels that the difficulty is solved and his isolation overcome, with the results that have been noted. And because a material Christianity is the prevailing religion, and because the Gospels contain such sentences as "Come unto me," "Follow me," "He that believeth on the Son of Man hath life," this higher power is conceived as the individual person of Jesus. But this particular conception is not essential. It was natural that the attention of the people of Palestine should have been especially directed to Jesus himself, that they should have put their trust in him and have been possessed by the idea of him, and that their records should show this. But why should we take words addressed to certain Jews in the first century as literally applicable to each individual in England in the twentieth century? We may discover their spiritual significance—to trust in and surrender oneself to the divine spirit, God, whom Jesus manifested (*i.e.*, made more clear) to the Jews. Belief in the ultimate unity and goodness of the world—this is the essential for action, happiness, life.

Though the experience of conversion is not confined to the particular phrases and ideas with which it is ordinarily associated, is it yet necessary that every man should experience the essentials of the change, should pass through a crisis in his life in some form? There is plenty of evidence to show that such is not the case. We must all change, climb on our dead selves to higher things, and come to apprehend our own insignificance in relation to supreme power. But such change may take place gradually, be of the nature of growth, possibly accompanied by epoch-marking moments, but without any such sudden radical change as to warrant the name of conversion. There are plenty of men of the highest and most spiritual type who have not passed through such a crisis. I quote again from Professor Starbuck:—

> That such harmonious development is possible is beautifully illustrated in the case of Dr. Edward Everett Hale, the strength and symmetry of whose character needs no emphasis. He discusses the nature of his growth and the influences which led to it, in these words: "I observe, with profound regret, the religious struggles which come into so many biographies, as if almost essential to the formation of the hero. I ought to speak of these, to say that any man has an advantage, not to be estimated, who is born, as I was, into a family where the religion is simple and rational; who is trained in the theory of such a religion, so that he never knows, for an hour, what these religious or irreligious struggles are. I always knew God loved me, and I was always grateful to Him for the world He placed me in.....To live with all my might seemed to me easy; to learn where there was so much to learn seemed pleasant, and almost of course:

> to lend a hand, if one had a chance, natural; and if one did this, why, he enjoyed life, because he could not help it, and without proving to himself that he ought to enjoy it. I suppose that a skilful professor of the business could have prodded up my conscience, which is, I think, as sensitive as another's. I suppose I could have been made very wretched, and that I could have made others very wretched. But I was in the hands of no such professor, and my relations with the God whose child I am were permitted to develop themselves in the natural way."[1]

Jesus, unlike his so-called followers, discriminated between the different people who came to him; he took into account the state and circumstances of each one, and gave the advice that each in particular needed. To the young ruler the counsel was action—to keep the commandments and give to the poor. To those who were listening to the parable of the sheep and the goats the instruction was to be compassionate towards the unfortunate. The wretched woman taken in adultery was inspired with hope, and only told to sin no more. The Pharisees were materialists, who placed great importance in their traditions and ceremonies and definite religious acts, and made rigid distinctions. They failed in an essential point, and it was necessary to tell them that they must be radically changed and become as children.

Nicodemus was a Pharisee, and to him, according to the fourth gospel, Jesus said: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of

[1] *Psychology of Religion*, p. 305.

God." For the word "again" the margin of the Authorised Version substitutes "from above." Nicodemus, of course, interpreted the words literally and failed to grasp their significance, so Jesus explained that he meant a spiritual birth. There must be an inward life of the spirit, a life of thought and feeling, as well as the active bodily life. To the visible bodily life belong such good things as riches and strength; but trust, love, happiness, belong to the inner life. Objects, dogmas, acts, on which so much stress was, and is, laid by Pharisees, have no value in themselves, only a relative value measured by what they signify to the thought and feelings in each case. And a man cannot create his own spiritual life; it comes to him like birth. To try to believe or to try to love is useless; belief must be intuitive and love spontaneous. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." What a man can do is to live thoroughly the life that he has; and, though in some cases there is very little sign of it, every man has some degree of inner life.

We cannot live without faith, and we learn the necessity of self-surrender; but there is no particular authorised path by which we must climb. Some "Christians" to-day say that the sacraments are all-important, others that "conversion" is essential; but Jesus did not teach thus. As with

creeds so with experiences; no particular kind is necessary to good life or to eternal life. If a man is convinced that he has made clear his own way, he will desire to give his friends the benefit of his knowledge; but by asserting that his way is the only way he merely brings upon himself dislike or ridicule. Some get on a wrong path, and can only regain the right direction by crossing a chasm; but there are others more fortunate, who climb steadily without being confronted by such a difficulty. If Christian life only begins with conversion, it follows that it is rare for a child and impossible for a young child to be Christian; whereas Jesus said, "Of such is the kingdom of heaven." "Conversion" is not a supernatural experience which leaves a man different in nature from other men; it is the crisis which marks that a morbid feverish soul has reached its worst point and has begun to recover health.[1]

A verse that is often quoted by "Christians" when they find that other people reach conclusions different from their own is that in the Epistle to the Corinthians: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."[2] It is true that a man can perceive only those things which his previous experience enables him to appreciate:

[1] See *The Varieties of Religious Experience.* Professor James.
[2] 1 Cor. ii. 14.

this has more than once been emphasised in the previous chapters. Only he whose education has reached the necessary level can appreciate a piece of knowledge or beauty; and only he who has sufficiently known joy, sorrow, difficulty, hope, or other spiritual experiences, can understand how much they signify in comparison with visible things — the things of the world. But the "Christian" who quotes this verse has a different meaning. He implies that there is a supernatural difference between himself and those who think differently which causes him to perceive the truth, while the others cannot do so. That may have been the meaning of Paul, who had himself had a conversion-experience at Damascus. But it is a view opposed to all we read of Jesus, who was a much greater authority. And it would place a bar on all rational search for truth. It is the unreasonable view of the man who cannot perceive his own limitations, or understand the possibility of a different point of view.

The doctrine of original sin may be brought forward to show that men are fundamentally bad by nature, and that they can only be made good by a radical change, a re-generation. But if any man were absolutely and fundamentally bad, if his will were bad, then he must remain bad; he is condemned from birth. His own will must decide for him, and if it is bad he cannot alter himself, and no one can alter him. Everything must fulfil the law

of its being. Is it suggested that he may be saved by a miracle? Such doctrine destroys his responsibility, and merely supplies as a reason all the unreasonable system of supernaturalism. It is in their condition, in their low stage of development, not in their nature, that men may be called bad. Men are weak and ignorant; they suffer struggles between flesh and spirit; they often do not know what to do, and they cannot always do what they would. But it is their powers that are bad, not their wills. It is not from Jesus that this doctrine comes: he would not have blessed the children if their wills had been bad. He told his disciples to regard God as their Father, and hence their own natures as divine. He understood men, and allowed for their condition, saying on one occasion: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." He expected them just to progress, not to make leaps into strange regions, while he held up as the ideal the maxim, "Be ye perfect." Fundamentally bad wills belong to melodrama, not to life.

A distinction is made between "religious" or "Christian" men and others according as they devote themselves mainly to preparation for another life after death, or to the good of this life. The wise and strong, those whom all admire, are yet held to be of no account as viewed from the religious standpoint. The ideal character, as conceived by common

sense and experience of the world, seems to differ from that suggested by the New Testament as generally understood. In the epistle from which I have quoted above Paul writes: "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?.....For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty."[1]

Is there, then, an opposition between the secular ideal and the Christian ideal? Are statesmen, poets, philosophers, inferior to ministers and missionaries and to the "religious," however feeble these may be? Ought we to devote ourselves, as far as we can, to preparation for the next world, neglecting the concerns of the present one? The idea of living this life as a preparation for the next rests, I think, on the conception of the existence of two worlds—this one and the next—which are radically opposed to one another; and on the assumption that it is necessary for everyone to choose which of these worlds he will belong to, and, having chosen, to give up the other. If a man choose the next world, as he

[1] 1 Cor. i. 20, 26.

should, then, though he must live in this world, he should not be of it, but ought to turn his attention from its affairs and interests to the greater consideration of the next world, and of the means of bringing his fellows to it. Of human pleasures, even though refined and innocent, he should be suspicious: they are vain and will soon vanish. It is better to wait for the kingdom which is coming, the supernatural kingdom which God has revealed by Jesus Christ. And this dualistic idea seems to receive support from certain sayings of Jesus as, "Ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world." "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon." "My kingdom is not of this world." Objections to this dualism and supernaturalism were made in Chapter V.; there are further considerations.

We are accustomed to contrast different worlds, such as the physical world of the senses, the world of ideas, the various worlds which people imagine. But these worlds are intimately related to one another. A man may, perhaps, on the whole, live in a world of imagination, and be said to belong to it; but, if he lose a sense, his imaginative world is mutilated. On the other hand, as we have seen, a man's senses only tell him what his ideas allow them to. Underlying these different worlds known to us there is *one* world—*the* world. The spiritual world grows out of the natural world. It is experiences of the natural world, the relations between

men and things, which reveal the nature of temperance, courage, love, and the whole spiritual world. It is only by knowledge of the human that one learns of the divine. Men cannot, as their minds are constituted, think "at a distance"; the higher thoughts and life must be connected to the lower. Spiritual life is not a separate edifice to which one should transfer oneself: it is better compared to the building raised on the natural foundation or the flower evolved from the natural root; it is better still compared to the architecture of the natural building, or the life which is expressed by both root and flower of the natural plant. Spiritual life does not primarily mean destruction, but fulfilment. It is "the highest and most human, too." Whatever may be in store for us after death, the future cannot be divorced from the present. It is only by what this world shows to be good that one can have any idea of what good is. The dual idea is but the monastic idea in more modern form. The kingdom of heaven is not reached by giving up what life shows to be good, and devoting oneself to Bible-readings, church-goings, prayer-meetings, but by living this life harder, by refusing to be content with what life shows to be vain and seeking for what is deeper and more really good. It means refusing riches or fame as a substitute for happiness, and in all directions declining to be satisfied with mere appearances. Spiritual life is living spiritually—*i.e.*, really and thoroughly, whether

one is a scientist, a poet, a minister, or a grocer, doing with one's might what one's hand finds to do. It is for us to live in the real present, not in an imaginary future. Religious practices should be means to live this life well, not to hinder it for the sake of the next. If this life is lived well, the future may be trusted not to bring punishment. "Take no thought for the morrow"; "sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

The idea of a supernatural material Kingdom of God which should absorb the attention of this life may be compared to the first notion of the disciples, that Jesus was going to set up a kingdom in opposition to the Roman rule. But he said: "The kingdom of heaven is within you." It is a spiritual kingdom of the present as well as the future. "My kingdom is not of this world" may be interpreted: "My kingdom is not a material kingdom." Values in a spiritual kingdom are of a different order to those of the material world. And when he said "the world shall hate you," he meant the established world—those in possession, those in recognised positions, and more generally those who, having their fixed opinions, were unwilling to receive new teaching. People resent new ideas which affect their fundamental principles; they cannot understand change in what has long been fixed. And so they stone the prophets. When the houses which were thought to be securely founded are threatened by the tide, the

tide must be kept out: such august buildings, whatever their foundations, must not be allowed to fall. The common people received Jesus gladly enough; but the Pharisees, the recognised guides to public opinion in religious matters, at once hated him as an innovator and opponent. They may have believed that they were doing God service, as many since have thought they were serving Jesus by opposing freedom and progress. But they were ignorant, and—the deadly part of it—did not know, or would not admit, their ignorance. The world-old battle between old and new, between tradition and truth, was continued—the Pharisees for tradition, Jesus for the truth. That is the nature of the opposition between Jesus and "the world."

The difference between the religious and irreligious man is that the former is of a more serious temperament, looks at life more as a whole, has more insight into the eternal spirit of things; while the latter is more superficial and devoted to the passing appearances of the world. It is not a difference in nature, but one of degree. It is not a matter of forsaking this world for a traditional imaginary one, but of following closely the most real, beautiful, and true things in this world. The religious man is the man who acts from principle. He places inward happiness before outward prosperity, right before convenience. There are many who deserve the title given by Jesus to his disciples

—"the salt of the earth"—the workers in every sphere who, though unknown or perhaps unpopular, pursue conscientiously their course regardless of inadequate appreciation in the world. But the difference between these and other men is not a supernatural one. It is that they have a clearer understanding of the spiritual nature of things.

Between the religious ideal and the world's ideal, between the religious man and the man that the world considers great, there is this distinction. The idea of greatness is statical, denoting attainment; the type of a great man is one of formed character, a man of experience and good habits, possessed of strength, taste, knowledge. The religious idea is dynamical, denoting pursuit; the religious man is one who seeks, climbs, hopes. The religious, like David or Mary Magdalene, may do much wrong; but there is hope for them: they love much. Greatness shows a man's relation to his fellows; his religion shows his relation to the infinite source of power and greatness. The type of the religious man is a child, the embodiment not of attainment, but of promise. And this should, according to the teaching of Jesus, be the type of the Christian. Not he who holds the orthodox creed deserves most to be called Christian, or he who has been "converted," or he who is strict concerning the orthodox observances, but he who trusts, loves, seeks, and is single-minded. To be a religious man is not necessarily to be a great

one ; but a great man is commonly a religious one, for it is by finding their way further than other men into the real nature of things that men become great.

A man can only become better and more religious by gradual growth, by steady evolution. We may pass through crises, but we cannot jump over gulfs. On the curve of each individual life there may be a cusp, but no discontinuity. And how does a man grow? By living—trusting, doing, learning ; trusting that the world is self-consistent and ultimately favourable to him, in spite of the shocks he receives ; doing as well as he can what he has to do ; learning what is necessary to guide his actions and the lessons of failure. No man by taking thought can add a cubit to his stature. Not by a sudden decision at a mission or revival meeting can he save himself. A decision is only genuine if it wholly represents a man's character at the time ; if it represents what he is, not what someone else tells him he ought to be. It should be the wholly voluntary expression of his own spirit, so wholly voluntary as to be involuntary. A man must be true to himself, not calling that truth which his whole nature does not affirm to be truth. That only is spiritual food for him which he can assimilate—*i.e.*, which can become one with his nature as it is. His knowledge must grow out of what he knows already, and his love out of what

he loves already. It may be necessary for some men who are wrong not only in practice, but in theory, as the Pharisees were, to undergo a great and deep change; but the inmost nature, the essential principle of a man, cannot be changed. It may be necessary to change one's course or repent, but there is a religious principle deeper than repentance —the positive principle to go on. The forerunner of Jesus spoke of repentance; Jesus himself went further. His teaching is not best summed up by the words, "Turn back," as his so-called followers seem to think, but by the words, "Go on." He was not always telling men what not to do, but helped them to do. His method was not to resist evil, but to overcome it by good.

Because characters grow, it is important for a preacher to refrain from exhortation and pleading. A man is pleaded with when he is wanted to do something against his will to please the pleader. To exhort a man is to try and force him, and a man's spirit cannot be made to grow in this way by force any more than his body can by physical force. He may be got to act more or less against his will; but it is only by willing acts that his will can develop. It may be said that, if he can be got to act, acts grow into habits, and habits make character. But such a growth is of an unnatural, unhealthy, alien character, as is illustrated by the falling away and other bad results that follow revivals. That all do not fall away after these

revivals indicates that some acted through appreciation of the preacher's enthusiasm or arguments, and not from constraint. That there is a place for physical resistance in education has been indicated. But it is not by any resistance to the spirit that the spirit can be developed. Not by impulsion, but by attraction only, can such development be effected. To plead (not merely argue) with a man about his soul is to attack it. That is why men who will cheerfully submit to physical resistance loathe to be preached at, and why children object to be coaxed. Cruel spiritual mutilation is often perpetrated on the young, sensitive, and conscientious by these special pleaders. Instances are given in Professor Starbuck's book, some of which I quote in the next chapter. The part of the preacher is solely to place his own experience at the service of others for them to make such use of as they can, and in this his example is as important as his precept. To attempt to bend the tender shoots of personality before him by the steam-roller weight of his own is to do a very great wrong.

To summarise—real religion, spiritual religion, must be founded on a man's complete experience, making what use it can of history and tradition, but taking into account the whole possible field of inquiry. Its basis is not the past, but the present. The supreme authority for each individual is his conscience; all other authorities must take a

subordinate place. Absent from it are unnecessary mysteries like those of the old theologians and sacerdotalists, and artificiality—beliefs not intuitive, acts not wholly willed; present in it are real belief and enthusiasm such as that which is seen in the scientist, artist, and every true worker—qualities which he has not manufactured, but which he possesses by reason of his divine nature. Religious feeling is not fear of an unknown king, or devotion to the practices of mediæval Christianity; but it is the divine spirit which inspires all men in some degree, and is more distinctly manifested by heroes. Religion is not confined to any particular words, places, dogmas, events, or experiences. Its observances are nothing in themselves, and are not an insurance against the risks of a world to come, but aids to efficiency in this world, to be used unconstrainedly. It is natural as opposed to supernatural, which means simply that it is to be studied by thinking freely, not by the suppression of thought. It is not a necessary nuisance, but the pursuit of what is best and most truly satisfying in this world. The foundation-stone of its ethics is to live thoroughly, and to let live. Its most typical maxim is not "Repent," but "Go on." It does not put all things on a pantheistic level, but it rejects the exclusiveness and the absolute distinctions made by ordinary "religious" people. The individual is of primary importance, for it is only by individual experience that knowledge is

manifested. On the other hand, it is for the individual to remember that his knowledge is that of his own experience only, and necessarily incomplete. He has no right to judge other men's souls. And his individuality is of a relative nature: he is dependent upon other men and things. He is but a phase of the whole scheme of things; he has no private rights, but his good is inextricably wound up with that of other men. And he has no private power, but in the last resort must surrender himself trustingly to the Supreme Power.

Jesus came to a generation ruled by tradition, and he refused to bend to this tradition, his reason being that he felt that he had a higher authority in his own soul. This higher authority he proclaimed by calling himself (or allowing himself to be called) "Son of God." And he told his disciples also to regard God as their father, thus teaching the supremacy of private judgment in religion, that it is only through individual experience that we can learn divine truth. Thus, too, he taught men their potential divinity, with all that is thereby implied as to power and resources open to them. The truth of the doctrine of Incarnation, stripped of unintelligible subtleties about God and man, is that the Spirit of Man is divine.

This doctrine is the foundation-stone of his ministry of reconciliation. He went about teaching by word and deed the underlying unity and

goodness of things. He went to the outcasts with a message of welcome, not only saying that such people were not entirely without hope of heaven, but that they might be nearer to it than the respectable and orderly Pharisees. He recognised that there must be outward divisions among men, saying, indeed, that he came to promote division. But beneath all divisions there was the one divine spirit in them: they were brothers. His ideal was unity, not uniformity. Though he lived among a superstitious people, who looked for supernatural signs, his appeal was to the understanding, implying a continuity and relation between things, and he did not make an opposition between body and soul. He suffered, but triumphed, spiritually, over suffering. And so "at-one-ment" describes the nature of his ministry.

The Pharisees would have strict observance of the letter and devotion to religious exercises. Jesus taught that they were comparatively unimportant. He continually opposed the materialism, not only of the Pharisees, but also of his own disciples. To be spiritually-minded is the first essential of being a Christian, whether or no it be accompanied by any creed-rehearsing or church-going. The Jews were exclusive, select; Jesus would include all. The torn-veil is one of the most characteristic symbols of Christianity.

The principles on which his teaching about conduct rested follow from the principles of unity

and divine immanence. They are the principles of trust and love—trust that "God's in his heaven, all's right with the world"; love for the best, the most true, beautiful, and good things that can be found in life. The detailed rules of conduct are for each individual, generation, and society to settle to the best of their knowledge. The true attitude was symbolised by the child, who is spontaneous, trustful, loving, seeking to know and to do. All this teaching agrees with present experience.

The magnetism of the individual personality of Jesus, the affection which he inspired among his followers, was the great motor factor which caused the acceptance and spread of his teaching, the factor of most importance in his own generation. This is the centre and essence of Christianity for some to-day, and if it be held spontaneously and not from an unnatural cultivation there can be no ground of dispute with those who hold it. But to most people it seems unnatural to profess superlative attachment to an individual they have never seen, who lived nineteen hundred years previously, and of whom they can only learn by means of doubtful historians. They may yet be enthusiastic for the spirit, the principles which animated that individual. According to the Fourth Gospel, Jesus seems to have recognised the error of his disciples in devoting themselves to his own Person instead of to the Divine Spirit animating him, when he said that unless he went away the truth would not

come to them. So that on this matter, as on all others, he is on the side of those who think freely and rationally and oppose superstition.

The indifference of many to "religion" was mentioned in Chapter I.; it is due to the abstract doctrines and useless practices which are presented in the name of religion. There are others who regard "religion," or at least "religious" people, with more than indifference—with dislike. That is not because they dislike sincerity and truth, or any of the essentials of religion. But they dislike pretension. They object to dogmatic theories which do not appear to them to be sound, to the assumption of superiority commonly made by "religious" people, and to being informed (even if it be by implication only) that they are wicked because they do not think or act as these "religious" people would have them. They resent the insult offered by the "religious" man, who supposes that he knows more about other men's souls than those men themselves do. They will not have their spiritual concerns interfered with, and will not be dictated to concerning them.

As to our inward principles, we are bound to differ, more or less, from one another as our developments differ. It is in externals that we are on common ground, and in external matters of conduct, etc., we have to come to some settlement either by reason or force. In spiritual matters

each is master in his own house; and no one, without invitation, has a right to interfere in the internal organisation of another.

"Religious" people commonly tell young converts that they must expect to be laughed at in the world for their religion. But truth, faith, love, and all the essentials of religion, are not laughed at —at least, not with hostile intent. It is everywhere common to jest about sacred things, when time and place do not forbid it. Such sacred subjects as birth, marriage, and death are fruitful sources. No harm comes from that, if the circumstances are not unsuitable; jesting is the great antidote to morbid excess. It is not the sacred things themselves, but the distortions which accompany them, that provide the jest, by the contrast of sublime and ridiculous. Pretension, unsoundness, unconscious ignorance, priggishness, provoke hostility or mirth, and rightly so. And if sacred things are dragged out from their proper reserve, and paraded on unsuitable occasions, they inevitably meet with some such treatment. It is for these reasons that "religious" people commonly get laughed at. But that reality, sincerity, truth, are regarded with either indifference, hostility, or contempt by Londoners to-day—notwithstanding the epithets that are hurled on them from the pulpit—is not true; and I believe it is not true of any people in the world.

X.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

THE untrue separation between "religious" and "secular" things has been applied, in particular, to education. But if we use the words in a rational as opposed to the ecclesiastical manner, the distinction between the meanings is one of degree only, not absolute. "Secular" describes that which relates more nearly to things external, temporal, material, and conventional, the concerns of the changing body; "religious" means that which is more closely connected with a man's soul, his inner thoughts and feelings, and to the timeless principle which pervades all men and things. Body and soul are inter-dependent. To educate the body is to influence the soul, and *vice versâ*. Secular education must have consequences of a religious nature. Is it not owing to the biological and historical teaching of the nineteenth century that the religious views of the twentieth are becoming so profoundly modified, even in circles considered orthodox? Teaching about any of the manifestations of God is religious teaching, and all things in some degree manifest God. Teaching is not the less religious because it is based on present

experience instead of on traditions about the past. Physics, natural history, national history, have their word for the soul as well as the body.

"Religious instruction" in the old sense means instruction in a certain traditional system of doctrines, in the Bible or Prayer-book, in hymns and prayers. Its method of teaching is dogmatic, and it commonly has, as one of its main characteristics, much learning by heart—the committing to memory of texts, hymns, or answers to a catechism. Being founded on authority rather than on concrete verifiable facts of experience, it must needs be largely a matter of mere words. Such "religious instruction," from its limitations of subject-matter, its faultiness in method, and the insufficiency of its doctrines, is most inadequate.

Its inefficiency is seen in its results. Our great Public Schools are governed, in the majority of cases, by a clerical headmaster who makes, we may suppose, a prime point of the religious education of his pupils. When these pupils leave school we find them possessing high principles of manliness, cleanliness, *esprit de corps;* and they are not to be called irreligious, as I have used the term. But their religion has not come from their "religious instruction." They seem to have been very little influenced by that, except to have been repelled by it. Their attitude towards things "religious" is the very negation of enthusiasm. Their allusions to the next world and all that concerns it are not

characterised by respect. College deans can testify that the average undergraduate does not love chapels. And the evidence (*e.g.*, the deserted churches) goes strongly to show that these men, as they grow older, do not learn to appreciate any more the "religion" they are supposed to have been taught.

And "religious instruction" of the dogmatic kind is not more successful in other quarters. A writer on "The Religion of the Errand-Boy" says[1]: "There (at Sunday school), under the incomplete control of excellent young people with very hazy notions, they imbibe their morals. A vague Personage called Jesus is help up to them to revere and to love. To love Him ensures salvation. Of ways and means they are not quite sure, and they do not disturb their serenity by contemplation. And so they drift on." It may be said that there are cases when the teaching is successful. Perhaps there is one fair success to nine more or less complete failures; that, I think, is a liberal estimate. And what success there is consists probably far more in the gain of proselytes than in the making of spiritual men. It may be urged that it is necessary to have faith and to persevere. It is often well not to know when you are beaten; but it is also well to be capable of reflecting whether, when success is conspicuously

[1] C. B. Penny, *Contemporary Review*, September, 1904.

absent, it may not be necessary, not merely to make further efforts, but to make a change in the plan of campaign. It is in the presence of failure that self-examination becomes necessary, and the only way to find a remedy is by free thinking—reasoning out to the utmost the causes of inefficiency. And that thinking should produce any good result requires that the whole scheme of things be thinkable—*i.e.*, rational. The poison of a supernatural religion ultimately based on authority is that it stops improvement at the source by preventing thinking.

As our view of the nature of religion becomes broader and more intelligible, so will our view of religious education, and we shall no longer remain content with the vain repetitions of the past.

Religious education means a gradual initiation of the pupil into the fundamental nature of himself and of the universe—not merely the material universe of space studded with stars, but all, whether psychical or material, of which he can have cognisance. Religious education means direction towards reality, towards the truth which lies beneath all appearances, towards principles on which the learner may repose in stable equilibrium when the surface of life is storm-tossed, towards the essential and timeless which survives the outward changes of the world. And no one has travelled the whole road and probed truth to the bottom.

All that the most experienced teacher can do is to assist his pupil a few steps on the way.

Religious education is concerned with the whole being; with the feelings as well as the thoughts. It is instruction, and it is, still more, inspiration. Instruction deals with words and the relations between things; but the meanings of the words (what they connote) and the values of the things related depend on feeling experiences. He who has loved and lost has gained knowledge unknowable to him who has not loved. The survivors of the Light Brigade came back with a knowledge which no years of study could have given them. It is a part of religious education, by providing opportunities, or taking advantage of opportunities, to make the learner feel what life is, what love is, and what beauty is. It is useless to talk to him about goodness or beauty unless you show him examples of them. Handsome school-buildings and conscientious schoolmasters effect more than mere talk about æsthetics or morality. If a man *feel* that the universe is trustworthy, he does not want the support of an external Authority or an antiquated creed. To awaken and feed enthusiasm is the most important part of religious education; and the most powerful factor in so doing is personal influence—possibly indirect. "Soul," says Carlyle, "is kindled only by soul."

Thought and feeling are inter-dependent. Good instruction inspires; one cannot awaken enthusiasm

without teaching some lesson. But let the subject be considered from the point of view of thought and instruction. What constitutes a lesson in religion? Here, as in other directions, it is necessary to protest against the exclusiveness of orthodoxy. A lesson in religion does not necessarily require the use of Bible, or Prayer-book, however useful these may be. There may be, and often is, more religion in an English History or a Science lesson than in a so-called "religion lesson." Any lesson is religious which is really educative, which makes the subject living to the pupil and leads to a deeper insight. For it leads a step towards God. (To special religious lessons I refer later.) It is necessary for use in this world to possess in the memory stores of facts: where places are, when and where things happened, names of classes of substances or words. The accumulation of such stores and the learning of the conventions of society are a part of school-work. But there is a more important part than the providing superficial facts to be remembered, and that is training the learner to see, guiding him to understand underlying principles by bringing new facts into relation with old ones, explaining the new in terms of what he knows already. A man may be said to understand a thing when he realises its relations with his other thoughts. Increase in understanding strengthens the belief which understanding implies—that everything is a part of one

great whole, that the universe is not a chaos, but an organism of related parts governed by universal principles. By increase in understanding the learner becomes impressed by a sense of the continuity of things, of the constant association of causes and corresponding effects. In this association lies the moral principle that a man shall reap as he sows; and this unity of things is a scientific expression of the saying, "There is one God." Any lesson which leads beneath the surface of things to the understanding of principles is religious in some degree. There is no fear of religion being banished from any school so long as there is any true education in it. If the ineffective strife-producing traditional "religious instruction" be given up, there need be no loss of religion.

How far a lesson is religious depends largely on how it is conducted. Arithmetic, for instance, may be imparted as a series of rules, each one unconnected or but feebly connected with the others. The youth so instructed can mechanically solve examples of the kinds to which he is accustomed; he does not understand the nature of his calculations. But arithmetic may be taught so that every branch is understood in its relations to the other branches and to the elements. The youth who thus knows it, who comprehends its principles, and has penetrated to the spirit of it, can make his own rules, and is not afraid of a problem a little different from those to which he has been accustomed. He

is not merely manipulating mysterious symbols, but knows why he takes each step. And he has learnt deeply of the interdependence and reasonableness of things, and of the reign of law in the world. He has grown in the faith of the man of science that all things are ultimately reasonable, the faith which liberates from the bondage of tradition because it is based on a surer ground than either priest or manuscript. The mechanical rule-taught youth who is at sea apart from his rules, and can attempt to answer no question of a kind different from those which he has done previously, is typical of the "religious" man who is bound by his dogmas and rules and customs because he has not penetrated to their spirit and cannot do without them.[1]

Again, a history lesson may be a mere rote-learning of dates, statutes, winners of battles—a string of unconnected and not understood facts of no more spiritual value than an ordinary lesson in the Church Catechism. But a well-conducted history lesson may lead to a considerable insight into the motives of men; it may convey many ethical lessons, inspire by its recital of the deeds of heroes, and help to make clear the great law of progress. In such a case it becomes eminently religious. Whether or no a lesson is religious depends upon its spirit, not its matter.

[1] See Herbert Spencer, *Education*, chap. ii.

But if much religion may thus be taught indirectly, will it not be better to go straight to its depths, and give explicit lessons on religious theory and the fundamental principles of our existence? What are the relative values of direct and indirect teaching?

The power of the latter may be observed in the results which it effects in our Public Schools. There is little doubt that these are inferior to Continental schools in their intellectual instruction; but as schools for conduct and character they are world-famed. This training is almost entirely indirect. There are no lessons in conduct, unless we consider the sermon in chapel as such; and to this the results obtained seem, generally speaking, little indebted. For they do not include an esteem for "religion," and they are found to a great extent in the large day schools where there is not even this lesson. But they are produced by the atmosphere of *esprit de corps*, the contact with gentlemen, from example rather than precept, and the occasional word in season. The importance of the tone of a school is thoroughly realised. It cannot be denied that indirect training produces considerable results: the following reasons may help to explain its success.

Indirect learning means learning by experience, instead of by symbols representing experience; it is finding out, instead of being told. Whatever is thus learnt is learnt slowly, but it is really learnt.

There can be no suspicion of superficial veneer or words imperfectly understood ; but there is real growth by assimilation, the result of the exercise of the learner's own powers. Knowledge thus gained is picked up only so soon and so fast as the learner is ready and capable of profiting by it. There is no forcing or cramming. Whatever is so learnt is learnt soundly. And no young person can live under such influence for any time without being affected by it. Purer air is bound to bring increased health. Contact with the cultivated, living where high principles are implicitly accepted, must have some elevating effect. In early infancy it is only thus indirectly that the child can learn. It slowly associates certain sounds with certain experiences and picks up words. As it grows, it accumulates sufficient experiences of its own to enable others to explain to it novelties and things not understood in terms of what it knows already. And so it arrives at the possibility of receiving direct instruction by verbal explanation.

Direct teaching by means of symbols is characterised by its power of economy, and of bringing vividly into consciousness notions far beneath the surface life of the senses. It enables that which might otherwise take months to acquire to be learnt in a few sentences. By the powers of abstraction and concentration on some particular issue thus gained, our possibilities of knowledge

are indefinitely increased. Experiences may be classified, and subtleties and intricacies rendered manageable. But the usefulness of language is apt to cause forgetfulness that it is only a machine which arranges and works on materials previously furnished by experience. Knowledge cannot be conveyed to a child unless its experience enables it to appreciate the significance of the words used. From neglect of this principle verbal teaching is always liable to be valueless, and constantly is so. Such merely verbal acquisition produces no spiritual growth, but means only an external accretion—a plaster which may make a good show, but has no substantial worth. A child gains nothing by learning by heart such sentences as "I was made a member of Christ," or "He hath called me to this state of salvation," however glibly he may repeat them. And I think that in this way a great proportion—perhaps nearly all—of the dogmatic religious instruction now given produces no real result, or a negative result, either by causing perplexity or by inducing pupils to accept symbols in place of realities. It may produce adherents to a sect, but its tendency is to make materialists, and is essentially un-Christian in character. The strife about religious education recalls the words of Jesus: "Ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte."

If care be taken that direct verbal instuction be sound, of what, in the case of a religious lesson,

will it consist? Definite religious teaching means teaching concerning the fundamental nature of ourselves and the world and our relations to the world. It includes a study of conduct; it is concerned with acts, thoughts, beliefs and their relations. Thus it means lessons in philosophy, and includes some ethics and psychology. The basis of such teaching, the ultimate source of data and illustrations, must be present experience. In the second place, as sources of illustrations, are history and literature, the records of the deeds and thoughts of the past. It is not necessary that such teaching should be based exclusively on the collection of Hebrew writings which constitute the Bible, any more than it is necessary to teach geometry from the writings of the ancient Greek known as Euclid. The whole book of Nature is God's Word. Religious instruction should make use of all the best that has been thought in this sphere, whether the origin of the thought be Hebrew, Greek, Hindu, or English. Good results cannot be obtained while a large proportion of the available material is deliberately excluded. The principle of evolution and the commandment of Jesus require that the best use be made of our possessions.

Such direct religious instruction would form the completion and crown of a general education, enabling the learner to sum up all his facts in the deepest, most comprehensive, and simplest manner possible, and to be conscious, as far as possible, of

the nature of his position in the world. This instruction must necessarily be delayed, in the main, until the last stages of education. The pupil must have had sufficient experience, and be in the possession of enough facts, before he can appreciate their underlying principles. The abstract must be based on the concrete. A child learns soon enough that there is a difference between right and wrong, and can gather moral facts from lessons in history and literature—from the Bible or other book. Stories of men and their deeds, and the results of those deeds, interest it deeply. But its interest is mainly confined to the surface of things; it is not capable of seeing far beneath that surface. So it is not in a position to assimilate the deeper religious views of a man. The amount of religious theory which can profitably be given to a child is, I think, very little; there is not scope for a lesson, but only for an occasional word in season. When it asks questions, let them be answered candidly, not by the profession of a knowledge or certainty which one does not possess: such profession has its natural consequences later. The normal child is not sufficiently self-conscious to profit by religious teaching; it is only those who are more than usually sensitive that can be reached, and the effect on them is likely to be unhealthy, in some cases extremely injurious. With the young, religion must be implied; in later years it may

become more and more explicit. The words of Jesus were quoted in the last chapter: "I have yet," he said to his disciples, "many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now." On the approach of manhood there is an increasing interest in religious questions, though such interest is often blunted by the ill-judged, premature efforts of instructors in earlier years. Then is the time to give the best philosophical instruction that the age can provide, not a dogmatic inculcation of the theories of those Fathers of the Church whose successors opposed Galileo and Darwin.

It may be objected in the case of the children in the national elementary schools that they leave at an early age; that, if they do not learn religion then, they never will; and that, failing further opportunity, they will be benefited by learning by heart that which they will be able to understand later. To such a practice there are grave objections. Whatever its result in gaining supporters of some denomination, it is, I think, certain that it will not benefit the spiritual development of the child, and it may be a cause of no small injury. Food that is not digested only does harm, and the more taken the worse the consequences. To have to learn by rote what is not understood and appreciated is distasteful, and the child who has to do so looks with disfavour on that which seems to him nonsense and has unpleasant associations so

that, when it reaches an age when it might have turned gladly to seek religious instruction, it will instead feel repulsion towards that which its previous experiences have made it regard with distrust. If a form of words not inspired by meaning lie in anyone's mind a long while, he grows more and more from habit to look upon them as of no account. If the Bible were regarded rationally and used rationally, it would have a greater influence. The complained-of indifference to "religion" is due in part to premature teaching.

When a child is more than usually sensitive, religious teaching too advanced for it or in any way unsuited to it may lead, not to indifference, but to serious harm, more particularly so in the case of individual as opposed to class teaching. It is no light thing to venture into the soul of a living being; and when that being is young and delicate, and its reserve is broken into by the tactless and thick-skinned, cruel consequences ensue. Professor Starbuck says[1]:—

> The cases are numerous which indicate the lack of wisdom of teachers or parents in failing to sympathise with the real needs of young persons, and the consequent reaction against social standards. The following instances will illustrate: F, "I was pushed by older people into questionable extremes of piety" (years of revolt succeeded). F, "My Sunday-school teacher tried to get me to join the Church; when he talked to me it would harden me instantly." M, "My parents and

[1] *Psychology of Religion*, p. 302. M denotes answer by a male. F denotes answer by a female.

teachers impressed upon me that I must believe all or nothing (at nineteen). It did not take me long to decide which."

Another instance has already been quoted in connection with Sunday observance. Here are further brief extracts[1]:—

While it is important to anticipate stages of growth and prepare for them, it is just as important *that the different steps should not be hastened unduly*.....The testimony of those whose whole youth seems to have lost its equilibrium through inopportune responding, while yet only children, to the gospel of repentance, or by following the advice of some well-meaning person who did not understand the function of the first serious questioning of a child into religious truth, is a pathetic story. Just when the soul begins to put out its tentacles and feel its way into the higher life, it often happens that someone crashes into it with a gospel that contradicts every need of its nature. The disturbances of youth seem to be as much due to lack of sympathy of older people with the needs of human nature as to temperamental peculiarities and physiological defects.

"A boy's reserve," says Kipling, "is tenfold deeper than a maid's." "You may enter into that arcanum," said Edward Bowen of a boy's mind, "once a year, shoeless." Those who talk much of the holiness of the Sabbath or the Bible would do well to think much more of the sanctity of the soul. Woeful sacrilege is committed there by people who call themselves "religious." The young need protection from "religious" fanatics.

If it is necessary for a boy to leave school before he is able to understand the deeper truths about

[1] *Psychology of Religion*, pp. 418, 419.

life, he must leave without learning them. But if his training has been so conducted in accordance with the requirements of nature that he has confidence in what he has learnt, he will be likely, when the right time comes, to look for further enlightenment. The important matter is not that the pupil should be put in possession of some particular theory of life, but that his education should have been real and good in character, and that he should, as far as it has been possible for him to do so, have gained an insight, beyond time and space, into the underlying spiritual principles. If he is brought up in an atmosphere which implies that the world is good and true; that men are brothers; that troubles are necessary, but may be overcome; and that it is necessary to obey and to work, he will have a sure foundation on which to construct his own creed, when he is sufficiently experienced to do so. All that is essential in religion is very simple. And if the essential principles animate the daily life, much talk about them may very well be dispensed with. The promotion of simplicity was one of the chief features of the work of Jesus, and he took children as examples; but those who are so anxious to teach "religion" seem to prefer the "vain repetitions" of the Pharisees. They would do better to try to learn from their pupils than to teach them.

If a man's creed is to be real, not a mere repetition or verbal assent, but the complete expression

of himself, it must be the result of his own construction. Though he find a ready-made creed which he is able to accept, it cannot be his until he has taken it to pieces and fitted it on to his own experience. No one has any right to dogmatise about a creed; the only fair way and the only possible way to teach religion truly is to assist the learner by explanation or argument, leaving him to draw freely his own final conclusion. His religion expresses himself, otherwise it is mere formalism. It is only through the individual mind that the depths of reality may be explored; and each man's creed, if it is real, must represent his own inquiries. Religious instruction should acquaint the learner with the views of many schools of thought, not of one only: then, having made up his mind, he will not be at the mercy of paralysing doubts later on, when he wants his energies for action. Making up his mind does not mean that he closes it to the advent of new truth, but that he knows where he stands, is free to advance, and is protected against retrogression. Learning religion is a gradual building up of inner meaning on the outer sense life. It cannot be transferred in a lump from one mind to another. What the instructor can do is, remembering how he has made his own building, to provide material and advice to the learner, whose business is not to copy his teacher, but to make his own construction. And the instructor must bring his inner thoughts into simple, concrete terms in

which the other can find clear meaning. We are like detached houses between whose upper floors the only way of communication is by the surface of the earth. In the sphere of religious instruction, more than in any other, dogmatism is out of place. Dogmatic religious teaching is a vain attempt to foster a new and foreign growth in a pupil's mind, instead of endeavouring to develop that mind itself. Dogmatic instruction fails to recognise that the only true basis of knowledge is the present experience of the pupil; it is unscientific, and hence it is usually inefficient. When it is recognised that you cannot really provide a pupil with religion, but only with material facts with which he may make his own, then the religious education controversy must cease; for it will be seen how little dogmatic teaching has to do with vital religion.

The Bishop of London advocates that children be taught "the religion of their parents, and so be enabled to start in life with a definitely religious faith, which is the best strength to character in the battle of life, and the only comfort in its sorrows." The phrase "religion of their parents" is, I think, commonly an empty one. A writer in the *Contemporary Review*, speaking of the religion of the respectable poor, says: "In face of all the controversial bitterness aroused by the Elementary Education Act, it is curious to observe that my patients and their friends, almost without exception, are not so much indifferent to the dogmas of

religion as unconscious of their existence."[1] I suppose, in such cases, by the "religion of their parents" is meant the doctrines of that denomination which manages to gain the parents' consent. But in any case, if the child is to have a real and vital religion, one cannot dictate to it the religion of its parents or of anyone else, but it must be helped to make its own. True it is that "faith overcomes the world," and that religious faith is the thing most worth having in the world; but such faith does not depend on the knowledge and acceptance of any traditional system of doctrines. The growing list of martyrs to science shows the strength of the belief of these men, who risk their lives in the search for truth. And a faith which will face death is a religious faith, however little it have to do with history, authority, or tradition. Was not Socrates possessed by a religious faith? The authorities of his time called him irreligious, as the Pharisees called Jesus a blasphemer, and as the orthodox to-day call Freethinkers infidels. They manifest their own blindness.

Religion, it may be added, includes not only the greatest supports, consolations, and blessings of life, but also the greatest difficulties, wrongs, and horrors. It is a fire, capable of great good and evil, not to be played with, but to be approached with caution and preparation. Religious training

[1] M. Loane, "The Religion of the Respectable Poor," *Contemporary Review*, November, 1904.

has produced inquisitors as well as martyrs, Pharisees and hypocrites as well as heroes; it has brought misery as well as consolation. Religious instruction unwisely given is worse than none. It is not one of those things which cannot do harm and may do good; it may do very great damage.

Religious faith—the trust that all things work together for good—is the natural accompaniment of singleness of mind, purity of heart, cleanness of conscience. It is the natural confidence of the child. The older person expresses his faith in a creed; but it is the spirit which constitutes the real thing, and that is not dependent on any particular words. In the religious instruction of a child, Martineau pointed out that he "seldom requires to be led—only not to be misled." Dogmatic instruction misleads by giving undue importance to the letter, and by asserting the certainty of what is uncertain.

In conclusion, religious instruction is not the dictation of doctrines, but an inquiry into the depths of life. It must be based on present personal experience. Beginning with concrete illustrations, it must gradually evolve principles, and it must for the most part be postponed till later than the primary school age. In our religious education, as in our other religious concerns, we need more reason, a better understanding of the nature of Christianity, and less submission to tradition.

WATTS AND CO., PRINTERS,
17, JOHNSON'S COURT, FLEET STREET, LONDON, E.C.

THE NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY
REFERENCE DEPARTMENT

This book is under no circumstances to be taken from the Building

form 410